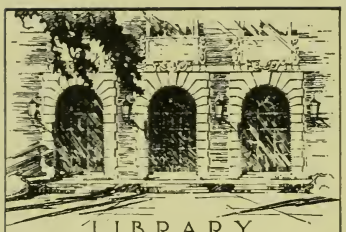
SANS CHANGER



LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
Sco88w
v. 2

Return this book on or before the
Latest Date stamped below.

University of Illinois Library

APR 25 1963

L161—H41

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/weirdofwentworth02scot

THE

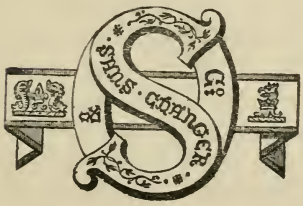
Weird of the Wentworths;

A TALE OF GEORGE IV.'S TIME.

BY

JOHANNES SCOTUS.

All nations have their omens drear,
Their legends wild of woe and fear.
SIR WALTER SCOTT.



IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

LONDON:
SAUNDERS, OTLEY, AND CO.,
66 BROOK STREET, HANOVER SQUARE.
1862.

LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

823
Sco 88w
v.2

THE WEIRD OF THE WENTWORTHS;

A TALE OF GEORGE IV.'s TIME.

CHAPTER I.

"Oh! Liberty, inspire me!
And eagle strength supply!
Thou, love almighty, fire me,
I'll burst my prison—or die!"

James Montgomery.

PERHAPS the noble aspirations contained in the lines that head this chapter are misapplied to a murderer flying his just punishment, but even to the felon-convict liberty is sweet. L'Estrange, as soon as he was left alone, began to think what he should decide on,—whether to escape or remain. There lay the rope, and the file to burst open the prison bars! All was prepared for his flight. Why did he hesitate? Why did he linger? Between the peals he heard the clock strike twelve; he thought too he heard the clatter of horse-hoofs, probably the Captain on his way home. Why did he stay? he felt an irresistible inclination to await his doom. Why? Because he would see Ellen once more! If he went—if he escaped—he would perhaps never see her—he would have to fly his country. He would stay. Come what might—it was death at the worst! But alas! the Captain, what would he think? he cared not for that. But what would he *do?* He who had gained

admission to his cell could again do so; he who had offered means of flight could also force him to fly; it was useless then, after all he must go! Oh, that he had never come! that man was his evil genius! "Farewell, then, to Scotland, farewell, Ellen, I must go and hide on a foreign strand." He then began to think how he was to manage his escape. After all it was not so very easy. What if he should fail? he had already lost precious time! Bill would only wait till three—he must be up and doing.

We must leave him a few moments in order to follow the Captain home. When he had brought L'Estrange to see escape was after all not to be trifled with, slipping a cheque for a large sum into the turnkey's hand he was let out by a side door. It was raining torrents, and his only light were the rapid flashes that lit the Welkin, and disclosed for an instant Arthur's Seat, and then swallowed all in the jaws of darkness again. He strode along whistling; if he met a watchman made some casual remark, or damned the night, then walked on again, taking his soaking with the utmost coolness, till he came opposite the High School. There he turned to the right, and descending a steep pathway dived into the north back of the Canongate, threading his way through the murky dirty habitations till Holyrood rose dimly before him. Here he was challenged by a sentry, but as he had possessed himself of the password and countersign, was readily admitted. Passing through the courtyard he again sallied forth, again gave the password, and was at last clear of all buildings in the Park now called the Queen's Park. He walked on a dozen paces, and then gave a shrill whistle: another, echo like, answered him, and he quickened his pace to where Archy stood holding a horse.

"A soaker, by G—, Archy."

"'Deed, sir, it is a soft night for being out by!"

"Go and rout up old Stacy—he is at the King's Tavern in High Street; tell him to watch for L'Estrange at Hunter's Bog from one to three. Have three horses, and ride to Prestonpans; there the smack is ready—don't let him stay behind, he must fly the country. It's no go about his sweetheart; he may perhaps carry her off a wedded dame—I never promised her he shouldn't—but I did promise she should get spliced. If he is obstinate shoot him, do you hear—tell Bill to shoot him, 'Dead dogs'—you know the rest, Archy. Now off, you young devil; you are as cunning as a fox; away—be sharp—quick march!"

With these words the Captain mounted, telling Archy to get a glass or two of grog to warm him, then putting spurs to his horse he rode homewards at a tremendous pace by a cross route for fear of being recognized. When he reached the Holly Walk, Archy's father met him, and took away the horse, which belonged to his own farm.

The Captain then walked to the east tower of the castle, crossed the bridge, and whistled an air beneath one of the windows. He had not long to wait; soon a window above was gently opened, and a rope-ladder lowered, up which the gallant officer swung, entered the room, and shook hands with Sir Richard. The window was shut, and no one in the castle aware the Captain had been absent, as he had retired earlier than usual from his toddy, having a natural dislike to Sunday evening.

"Is it managed?" said Sir Richard.

"Bravely—I had a d—d work to get round the old turnkey, whose brutal pigheadedness was only equalled by his gormandizing cupidity. Then L'Estrange was well nigh sobered by his solitary confinement, and then

that accursed storm has soaked me through. Give me a glass of brandy for God's sake. He must be gnawing through his cage now—and he'll have a good shake when he drops, for the rope wasn't half long enough!"

"Ha ha! what a joke! I should like to see his face after it; but how will you know if he got through all right?"

"Archy comes with the news to-morrow morning. Now good night, I must get to bed; won't the judges look blue? Egad!"

When Edward L'Estrange had made up his mind for the attempt, he began to consider his best plan of effecting it easiest; the window of course was the path to liberty; but the window was at least twelve feet above the ground, how was it to be reached? L'Estrange was no fool, and soon hit on an expedient. He uncoiled the rope, and found it was about twenty feet in length, and made of silk, being both thin and strong; he then took up the file; it was a foot in length, and in the middle a smooth place, with the edges rounded off. Why was it thus? It had evidently been made so? There was a reason; the Captain told him he was no fool; he would find it out. He was not long in doing so. To establish a communication between the window and the dungeon floor was the first point; there were three stout bars, with iron points like teeth along their edges placed uprightly in the window; if he could get the rope round one of them, or in any way catch it, so as to bear his weight scaling the wall? The reason for the file's shape then struck him; so he tied the silk cord tightly round the centre of the file, and threw the rope lasso-fashion so as to fling the file through the bars, and drawing it back sharply fix the line. The first throw missed; the second time the file went through, but as he drew the rope back, it slipped through the knot and fell. A thrill of

horror ran through him,—but fortunately it fell inside. He seized the file as if it was his last friend, and resolved not to hazard it again. What was to be done now? The knife—yes it would do; so he made it secure much in the same way, and he had a better hollow between the haft and the blade. Again he threw it; the light from the window was very slight, but after two more failures he succeeded, and, catching the rope, tried if it would bear his weight. It did, and he swarmed up, and was soon seated on the window sill. He tied the rope firmly round one of the bars, and then commenced filing. The rain dashed in upon him, and the vivid lightning once startled him so much he nearly fell back; but he worked on, and after an hour's labour filed through a bar; he forced it backwards and forwards till he loosened the upper end soldered into the stone; at last it fell out into his hand, and he then dropped it below in order to gain from the length of time it took in falling a rough estimate of the depth. He calculated it was at least thirty-five feet. He had twenty feet of rope; he would stretch nearly seven, leaving eight feet to drop,—nothing after all! He descended once more into his cell, secured his pistol, and climbed up again. He could not suppress a laugh as he thought how scared his gaolers would look when they found the bird flown. He then wound himself through the bars and the wall, getting somewhat torn and clawed by the spikes; but liberty was before him, and he recked not of the pain. After much squeezing and exertion he at last got on the outside. He looked once more to see if the rope was firmly knotted, waited for a faint flash of the waning storm, and then began his descent. It was not long ere he reached the *Ultima Thule* of his line; then with a beating heart, he let go. It was a horrid feeling, that letting go, and the fall in darkness! He had miscalcu-

lated the height; instead of thirty-five, the depth was forty-one or forty-two feet, and instead of dropping eight, he had fourteen or fifteen feet to fall. He fell with a heavy shock, bruising himself a good deal on the slippery rocks down which he rolled. He was, however, not materially injured, and when he looked back at the perilous height he had come from, and looked at his befouled garments dimly seen in the early dawning, he laughed heartily, and, losing no more time, dived into the Canongate, soon reaching the Hunter's Bog, where he found his comrades waiting. At first he hardly distinguished them from the rocks; then he saw the dark outlines of horses and men; by-and-by he distinguished Bill Stacy, Archy, and three horses. He quickened his pace.

"Hillo, you young dog, so you've run the blockade? A rascally time you have kept old Bill anchored in these d—d moorings."

"Bill, how are you? I was as quick as I could be. I thought I'd never saw through those d—d bars. How they will gape when they find me off!"

"I have no time for words now; get aboard your craft and away, or the blood-hounds will overhaul us."

"Away—where to? The old Peel."

"Not likely; away to the sea. You must give the old land a wide berth. The Peel! good God! That would be a wise *caché* to hit on."

"But I must not—will not leave this country. Can we not hide? What would happen?—they would be married!"

"I don't care what would happen, or what wouldn't happen. The ship has weighed anchor, and by it you go; and be d—d to the wench!"

"Stay, Bill,—what if I say I won't?"

"Then I say I will shoot you. I am in earnest. So

you had better be led! What the devil makes you care about a gal that don't care a straw for you?"

"Bill, what should you know of love?"

"What should I, or what shouldn't I,—up, I say, and off. G—'s name, it is gettin' light!"

Finding there was no remedy, L'Estrange mounted, and the three rode along the shore till they got to Musselburgh, when Archy turned off to the right; Bill and L'Estrange kept on till they reached a barren stretch of sand and common, where three more men met them. The five walked to the beach, where a smuggler's craft was in readiness. Leaving one to take away the horses, the other four embarked, and set sail. A fresh breeze, which had sprung up after the storm, swelled the sails, and they soon rounded the bay, steering southward.

Leaving them, we now return to the Towers. Of course, the news of the escape was so unlooked for—so startling—that for some time it was hardly credited. The Earl, the Captain, and one or two others rode in to Edinburgh, and found everyone at the prison in a vast state of excitement. A more audacious escape had never been perpetrated. Moreover, the turnkey was also missing, and the detectives could gain no clue. Hundreds of visitors saw the cell, the bars filed through, the rope still hanging, and the tracks of the fall on the rocks. Here, as a matter of course, all traces were lost, and it was conjectured he might be hiding in some of the dens of the old town. The most vigilant inquiries ended, however, in nought. It was evident he had bold and powerful confederates. The Earl was not without anxiety about Ellen, and determined to take her from the spot for some time. The marriage was fixed for the first week in November, and meantime Lord and Lady Arranmore invited the Earl, Lady Florence, and Miss Ravensworth to spend a month or two at their residence,

Claremont Castle, close to Killarney. The Captain left for Brighton, promising to be up at the marriage, and bring Sir Harry Maynard, Major Forbes, young Pringle, and others. The rest of the visitors left for their respective homes, receiving an invitation to come to Dun Edin Towers on the 8th of November, when the castle would be all decked out for the ceremony. A letter from Frank also announced he had got leave, and would come home from Corfu in time for his brother's marriage.

CHAPTER II.

"And ruder words will yet rush in
To spread the breach that words begin."—*Moore.*

We pass over the time spent at Claremont Castle, and again introduce our readers to the dining-room at the Towers, where a large party sat down to a very handsome repast. At the head of the table sat the Marchioness doing the honours of her brother's table with the greatest grace; she had but lately made the Marquis happy by the tribute of a son and heir to his titles. On the right of the Earl sat his bride elect in blushing loveliness, and down the long table we observe many old faces amongst a tribe of new. Talking to a pretty girl sat Sir Richard, about the middle of the table; directly opposite him was the Captain. Frank, lately returned from the Mediterranean, sat a few seats from the Marchioness. Then there was Scroop, Wilson, and Sir Harry Maynard, Major Forster, young Pringle, and numbers of ladies, amongst whom Lady Florence shone next Johnny, who was her devoted admirer; Mr. Lennox, Mr. Power, the clergyman, and Mr. Ravensworth made up a large company. The greatest merriment prevailed, and every one was speaking of the approaching marriage.

"How have you amused yourself to-day?" said the Earl, who had been in Edinburgh with Mr. Ravensworth and Ellen, as he cut into the fine haunch of venison that smoked on its massive silver plate; "it has been snowing so hard, I suppose it kept you in the house."

"Snow doesn't keep me in," said the Captain; "I and

Pringle were riding, though most preferred the ladies' company to snowy roads."

"Ah! we had the best of it," said Sir Richard, "had we not, Sir Harry; knocking about the billiard balls with the fair occupants of the Castle?"

"What? Why you don't mean to say you played billiards all day, Sir Richard?"

"Oh, dear no, my Lord; we spent most of the afternoon in admiring your fine gallery of family pictures; there's a long line of De Veres."

"Did you observe any peculiarity in the pictures?"

"I can't say I did, my Lord," answered Sir Richard.

"I did though," said Sir Harry; "and that was—excuse me, Mr. Lennox, but you are taking white wine with the brown vein of the venison"—(Mr. L. rectified his error)—"that was—hock, if you please,"—(to the footman)—"yes,—what was I saying? Some jelly—I thank you,—yes, yes,—that your Lordship had placed all the old personages on the right side, and all the young on the left side of the fireplaces,—a curious crotchet—some beer,—I thank you."

The Colonel was a great *bon vivant.*

"It is no arrangement," said the Earl; "but since the time of Earl Hugh, or the Roundhead peer as we call him, none of the family ever became old."

"A most curious fancy indeed! Here, Andrew, some more hock; this venison is beyond all praise, my Lord, cooked to the nicety of a minute,—a singular fancy to prefer dying so early,—ha! ha! ha!"

"It is no fancy, Sir Harry; you have evidently not heard of the Weird of the Wentworths."

"Do, Lord Wentworth, tell it to us,—you have so often promised," said Ellen.

"Of course," said the Earl; "I must do whatever a lady asks,—especially what Miss Ravensworth wishes."

He then told the singular narrative of Augusta de Vere, which we shall not repeat, as our readers already are acquainted with it. Lord Wentworth had merely wished to tell Ellen; but as he told a story remarkably well, before he had finished he found the whole table listening to him.

"A most singular and interesting story, my Lord," said Mr. Lennox; "but I opine we must give it the same belief we give ghost stories in general."

"No, Mr. Lennox," said the Marchioness, "this is quite unlike all other stories, because its truth is proved by facts in the Peerage:—you will find no De Vere since Hugh, Earl Wentworth, ever lived to be old."

"Certainly a curious coincidence, Lady Arranmore; and possibly explained by the simple fact, the De Veres are a short-lived family."

"But," said Lady Florence, "they were very long-lived before, as the portraits show; you must never tell a De Vere you misbelieve The Weird."

"There's no doubt about the matter," said the Captain; "with everything to attest it, he must be a fool who does not credit it; you will see all of us will be knocked on the head soon enough,—girls first; but a short and merry life for me!"

"Indeed, John, I don't see why we should die before you," said Lady Arranmore. "I fear you will be the first, with your fights and duels."

"Devil a fear; come, I'll bet I outlive both of you!"

"Come, I don't like this jesting," said the Marquis; "it is a serious thing; and for my part I am like Lennox, and don't believe in such nonsense."

"Nor I," said Sir Harry; "you are all hale and well; why should you think you will die so early? What a splendid pine!—will you allow me to give you some, Lady Florence?"

"I should think it was enough to make you quite nervous, Lady Arranmore," said Ellen, still thinking on the Weird,—"it is such a dreadful thing."

"No, Miss Ravensworth, we have become so accustomed to it, and brought up in the belief, we are almost proud of our doom,—we have learned to love it almost. After all, I should not like to grow old and—"

"Hideous," said the Captain; "no, no,—whom the gods love die young!"

"I fear, then, you will be the first old man, John, in our family," said Lady Florence, laughing.

"A good one! How d'you like that, Captain?" said Sir Richard, filling his glass. "Your health, De Vere!"

Without replying the Captain drank wine.

"If this is really an established fact," said Mr. Power, "I think it should make you very serious; it is doubtless intended as a warning; and if your days are to be short on earth, do you ever think that, after death, there is an endless existence of bliss or misery?"

"After all," said the Earl, "you are no better than we are, Mr. Power;—none of us know our end."

"True, my Lord; but if, as you say, none of your family live long,—and you are now all grown up,—the time is short; and you should take the more earnest heed to these matters."

"That is not my theory, Power: 'Happy for the day, careless for the morrow,'—that's Scripture; at least it was when I was a boy," said the Captain, whose ideas of the Bible were not very correct.

"This is the very perversion of Scripture, my young friend; when it bids us not be careful of the morrow, it means we are to lay all our cares on One who has promised to carry them."

"Well, Power, I am not learned in divinity; you stick to your trade, and I will to mine; you be a soldier of

God, and I will a soldier of the King, or the devil, if you like it!"

A suppressed murmur of disapprobation followed this, and the Earl changed the conversation by a totally irrelevant remark. Sir Richard, unfortunately for himself, as the story will show, brought back the conversation by saying they had found some striking resemblances to the present family in some of the portraits.

"Indeed!" said the Earl. "And in whom did you find my likeness?"

"In the seventh Earl,—Algernon, I think was his name,—a young man in a hunting suit. Then we found out a likeness for Lady Florence, in her grand-aunt Guendolen; and for the Marchioness in the Abbess Augusta; but the best of all was—"

"Don't, please!" said Lady Florence, whispering across Johnny; "don't say it; John doesn't like it." (Whether he did not comprehend Lady Florence's meaning, or whether he wished to prove the truth of her assertion, we know not; but in an evil moment he finished his remark)—

"—was the likeness to the Captain."

"And to whom do you liken me?" said the Captain, in a gloomy voice.

"To whom? Why,—ha! ha! ha! I shall die with laughter,—it was so like,—the old Roundhead peer, Hugh. I'faith you might have been brothers!"

"I wish to God you would find likenesses to yourself, and leave me alone! I like that old murderer, egad!—I like that!"

"Come, there's no harm meant,—it's a mere joke."

"D—n joking," muttered the Captain,—"I like the old Roundhead, egad!"

Lady Arranmore, fearing there was something looming here, bowed to Ellen Ravensworth, and the ladies

rose and left the room. The Captain looked gloomy, and appeared to have taken great umbrage at the unhappy resemblance; it was not a newly found out likeness, and even before this he had shown great wrath at the allusion. It was never quite evident why he disliked it, but at any rate it *was* evident he did so. When the ladies were retired, Sir Richard, anxious to gloss over his mistake, began—

"Really De Vere, you take mortal offence at a *jeu d'esprit*."

"Sir Richard, you seem determined to work me up to night. I advise you to think twice before you do so, or by heaven you may repent it."

"Why, De Vere, I think you are—I was going to say —crazy to-night: I merely said you were like Earl Hugh —you are like, and there let it end, I shall say no more."

The Captain was not inclined to let matters drop so easily, and replied, "I shan't drop it in such a jolly hurry; the fact is you have laid a plot to annoy me: egad you have, you did it before the ladies, and now you're raking the accursed thing up again, which proves it. You compared me to that d—able old renegade just to enrage me, by G— you did. I like that d—d, round-headed old ——! You have insulted me, Sir Richard. I am not the man to brook insults—you will apologize—I demand an apology."

The whole room were listening in dead silence to the quarrel, and Johnny, who had not yet left, was in high delight at the prospect of a scene. No one interfered yet, and the loud voice of the Captain as he demanded an apology to most seemed at the least ominous.

"I have done nothing to give me cause to make an apology; I appeal to the table, should I make one? Lord Wentworth, what say you?"

"You have insulted me, Sir Richard, and by G— I'll

have one, or know the reason why. I don't care who says you should not, I say you shall—I am waiting for an apology!"

"You may wait, De Vere, till doomsday,—you may sit there till you die,—but never will I apologize when I have done no fault."

"You have committed a fault. Ha! I see you are incapable of feelings like a man of honour; you must be forced to feel as you should. Sir Richard, you say you did not intend to insult me, I say you lie most foully in your throat; there—will that do?"

A thrill of horror ran like an electric shock through the company.

"Ha! you give me the lie, do you?" said Sir Richard, blanching with rage, "then take that."

As he spoke he threw a glassful of port wine across the table: the liquid hit the Captain on his mouth and chin, and poured over his orders and medals, for he was in full uniform. The revenge was quick as thought! Uttering a fearful malediction, the enraged officer seized a heavy cut glass tumbler, and threw it at Sir Richard with unerring aim. The Baronet dodged aside from the missile, and saved himself a blow on the centre of his forehead, but he did not escape. The tumbler struck him a terrific blow on his temples, and, as it flew into a dozen fragments, inflicted a terrible wound. In an instant, as by one consent, the whole table sprung to their feet. For a moment, too paralyzed to speak, a deathly silence reigned. The Captain's face was lit by a fiendish smile, as he wiped the red wine off his breast. Sir Richard's face was black with ire, as he staunched the blood that covered his forehead with his kerchief. The two foes looked as if they could have leaped the barrier that severed them, and locked in each other's arms divided not to death.

Soon a confused murmuring arose on all sides, and then voices grew louder.

"I wouldn't stand that," said Wilson.

"Nor I," said Frank.

"Give it to him, pitch into him, confound him, thrash him, Captain," cried the Marquis, whose Irish blood was at boiling point.

"Yes, pitch him out of the window,—kick him out of doors—d—n him," cried Frank, catching the fire. "He had insult enough to enrage a Moses."

"True—by heaven, sir! a glass of wine thrown at his face, good wine too, a most ungentlemanly trick, and unbecoming an officer of his Majesty's service," said Sir Harry.

"They should fight it out," remarked Forster.

"Yes, give it him, Captain, do," said Johnny.

The clamour now grew uproarious, when the Earl's voice was heard, loud and commanding,—"Silence, gentlemen, I insist! I *will* be heard at my own table. Silence, cease this brawling."

When order was restored, the Earl continued: "I am deeply grieved such an unjustifiable proceeding should have occurred at my table—that a scene which would have disgraced a pot-house should have been enacted here. I am surprised at Sir Richard's resenting an angry insult in the way he did, and at my brother giving him the lie, and then so far forgetting what was due to himself, and to me, as to fling glass at any guest of mine. I fear but one result—an hostile meeting—will wipe out the dishonour. The thing is done now, and cannot be undone, but at least let seconds be chosen, and all done in a decent and gentlemanly way. In conclusion, I am much hurt at my brother-in-law the noble Marquis hounding on the antagonists in the way he did, and at Frank's supporting him. I would have expected a boy,

like Johnny Ravensworth might have forgot himself. I do trust this is the first and last time such a disgraceful brawl will occur here, at least while I am master of the Towers!"

The Earl then sat down, and was complimented by several of the gentlemen for thus expressing his opinions. Mr. Power urged the plea of apology, but little heed was taken of him.

"Will you be my second, Arranmore?" said the Captain.

"Faith, not I," replied the Marquis, "I have made fool enough of myself already. I will not meddle in this unlucky matter any more."

"You have no such scruples, old boy," said the Captain.

"Not I," said Scroop, "I am your man."

"And will you be my second, Wilson?" said Sir Richard, his voice tremulous with passion still.

"With pleasure, we are quite *au fait* at these things on board ship."

"Come, Scroop, let's to business; after all, Musgrave, he had no business to give you the lie, and you retaliated the broadside well."

"And he found his match by G—," said Scroop, as he and Wilson walked aside, and in the most cold-blooded manner arranged everything with the utmost despatch—Time, place, weapons, and distance. "Time, at once; place, the Holly Walk; weapons, pistols; distance, twelve yards."

When these regulations were announced the Captain ordered Andrew, who then entered the room having got an inkling all wasn't right, to go to his room, and bring a mahogany case down.

"Is't to be a duel?" said the old man, handing him the case, which the Captain unlocked, and produced two

duelling pistols with black ebony handles, and inlaid with silver; on each was a silver plate, and on one neatly engraved three names with dates after them,—three victims to the Captain's sure aim!

"You'll gie's permission to hae ane keek at yer shootin', Captain."

"No—go to the devil."

"Sure, Captain, you're no in earnest; I was speerin' if—"

"Come then, but for God's sake cease your clavering," said the Captain, cutting the old butler short.

The whole of the gentlemen then rose and followed the principals and their seconds to the fatal spot. In those days little heed was given to the evil of duelling, and it would have made many modern ears tingle had they listened to the light converse on the road. The Marquis and Major Forster were betting on the likelihood of the Captain's being shot or not, as Sir Richard fired first, and the Major offered ten to one against him, which the Marquis took, saying, he had little fear he would miss his shot, unless he was hit through the head; for even if he was mortally wounded in any other part he would still give a dying, and probably a killing shot—he was so famous for his pistol-shooting. The two antagonists were each conversing with his second; Frank and Sir Harry were laughing and joking; the Earl and a large party were the quietest; and some few, such as Mr. Power and Mr. Ravensworth, came not to see the duel, but to strive and arrange a friendly termination yet. A short distance behind, old Andrew, with a tribe of footmen, followed; the butler was descanting on the wonderful sureness of the Captain's shot.

"I would not be him to-night though, and Sir Richard getting first fire—that's not a gentlemanly plan—both should fire together," said an English valet.

"Deil a fear o' the Captain—an' he be na shot in the heed, he'll hae his man! See him, he is as cool an' unskeered as though he had the first bleeze! Sir Richard is fey, I saw it a' the day—puir young man—his time is oot!"

"It isna the first chiel he has shot," said young Wilton, who appeared just then.

"Deed no, Jack—there's mayhap three, and mayhap mair names scratched on his weapon—Mr. John was ay a quarrelsome-like chiel—I mind him frae his childhood, he was ay fechting and pummeling, an' noo he has grown a man he but fechts wi' pistols."

"If neither are shot will they fight it out still, Andrew?"

"In troth will they—but dinna you trouble yer pate wi' sic nonsense—the Captin is na goin' to miss! Sir Richard I'll na swer to, but I wud tak' my aith *he'll* no miss."

CHAPTER III.

"It has a strange quick jar upon the ear,
That cocking of the pistol, when you know
A moment more will bring the sight to bear
Upon your person, twelve yards off, or so;
A gentlemanly distance, not too near,
If you have got a former friend for foe;
But after being fired at once or twice,
The ear becomes more Irish, and less nice."

Don Juan.

THE snow, which had fallen on and off during the whole day, had ceased, the sky cleared, a sharp frost had set in, and was already beginning to crisp the top of the snow, across which in varied groups the guests and retainers of the Towers walked. A few minutes brought them to their journey's end, and they all assembled in the Holly Walk. It was so named from the immense holly hedges that rose on each side of the broad green walk, and in the coldest weather was always a warm and sheltered path. Now the hedges were weighed down with the newly fallen snow, and the green grass covered to the depth of some inches. In the north-east was rising the cold round moon, which looked down on a white world with a placid eye, soon to be awestruck by deeds of blood. A few of the brighter stars challenged the lady of the night, and asserted their prerogative of giving light; and over the north and north-west the northern lights shot out brilliant streamers. The air was shrewd and biting, but no wind was stirring, and the only sound that broke the stillness was the cranch of the footsteps

on the newly frozen snow surface. In the dark shadow of the eastern side of the holly hedge was grouped the whole company,—excepting the seconds, who were pacing the right distance in the moonlit side of the walk. The Captain was talking in a light manner to Sir Harry; it was not his first, nor second, nor even third encounter, and he seemed to treat the matter with great indifference. Sir Richard had never before fought a duel, and though he had first shot he was not wholly at his ease like his antagonist; he stood by himself and silently watched the distance marked in the snow. Popular feeling was certainly on the Captain's side—he had heard them say there was only one place to shoot his foe if he wished to disable him from firing too, and he secretly resolved to aim for his head. The Earl and several others were speaking in a low tone on the coming dreadful match; Mr. Power, Ravensworth, and Lennox, were all three talking together, and Johnny some distance behind.

"This is a most ungodly and lawless business, Mr. Ravensworth," said Mr. Power; "we should try and stop it—you as his lordship's future father-in-law should have influence to prevent it."

"Mine is a delicate position, Mr. Power; much as I should like to see things amicably settled, I do not like interfering," replied Mr. Ravensworth.

"Certainly in your ministerial capacity, and as a soldier of the Prince of Peace—it seems to me, Mr. Power, this important duty devolves on you."

"Perhaps it does, Mr. Lennox, and I am but an unprofitable servant to fear man's displeasure; I must magnify my office and try what can be done; but I greatly fear it will be useless to try—nevertheless I can but make the attempt."

With these words he walked to where the Captain

was standing, but seeing several persons round him he proceeded further, where Sir Richard stood alone.

"Sir Richard, excuse my boldness in addressing a stranger, but as a servant of God I cannot see His laws broken without at least speaking His message. Sir Richard, you are either going to leave this ground with the stain of blood on your hands, or are going to rush unprepared into your Judge's presence. I beseech you pause, and make up this unseemly quarrel."

"I fear, sir, you do not know what you ask; it is impossible for me to back out of this even if I wished,—and I do not wish it,—without incurring the stain of cowardice."

"Alas! Sir Richard, you fear the opinion of your fellow mortal more than breaking your Maker's laws!"

"Sir, I admire your sentiments, and wish I could see things in the light you do; I regret I cannot—it is useless to urge me more, my mind is made up!"

"And God grant your peace with him is made up too!" said the clergyman, turning sorrowfully away towards the Captain, whom he thus addressed:

"Unhappy young man, ere it is too late, forgive your enemy—you will leave this ground with your hands stained in a fellow creature's blood, or—".

"Really, Mr. Power, it is not unlikely *I* may be shot, you are premature."

"And dare you meet your Maker with all your sins full blown—dare you hurry unprepared—"

"Mr. Power, you came here to dine, and not to preach—Heaven knows you have time enough on Sunday—so you had better keep your sermons for those who will listen to them."

"Ungodly man, I tremble for you—"

"It is more than I do for myself. Come, stow your sermons, old Squaretoes, and for God's sake, if I am to

be knocked off, let me end my life in peace. I'd rather stand at a cannon's mouth than yours—Lord knows which breathes hottest!"

Cast down, but not vanquished, Mr. Power next attempted the Earl.

"For the love of Heaven, my Lord, use your authority to put down this breach of God's laws, and man's also; let not murder take place in sight of your castle."

"I am very sorry I have no power in this matter at all, beyond seeing everything is done as it should be—else I would not be here. My motto is let every man mind his own business—you should apply to the duellists."

"I have, my Lord, and woefully I have been served."

"Then, Mr. Power, I have no chance in the world."

"Lord Arranmore, will you not use your influence?"

"What in the devil's name have I to do with it?—besides I have a bet of 50*l.* on the affair, so am not likely to stop it if I could."

"I wonder to see you patronizing such a meeting, Mr. Power; however, I suppose you are like your lay-brethren, and curiosity overcomes consistency," said Frank.

"Come, Mr. Ravensworth,—come, Mr. Lennox,—let us leave this godless crew—I have done my duty at least."

"I am much obliged, but must certainly stay," said Mr. Lennox, who had no idea of missing the first hostile meeting he had ever come in for. "I am a bit of a doctor, Mr. Power, and my presence may be required—there's Johnny Ravensworth, however, too juvenile for such entertainments."

"Come, my boy," said Mr. Ravensworth; "come along with us," following Mr. Power as he spoke.

"Mayn't I stay, papa?" Then in an under tone,

"Confound Mr. Lennox; he is glad enough to find an excuse, and vents his anger on me."

"No, my boy; come along directly. Do you hear me?"

"Let the boy stay, Mr. Ravensworth," said the Marquis. "It is well to accustom them early to this sort of thing!"

"My Lord, I wonder at you. When you have been a father as long as I have you will think otherwise."

"I' faith, were my boy a little older he should have been here," answered the Irishman.

"You had better go, Johnny," said the Earl. "Always obey your father. Sir Harry, here, will tell you discipline is the mother of all good soldiering."

"Indeed is it, my lad; now, quick march; you are delaying the encounter. And, by my stars! it is cold work halting in the snow. I had rather be over that excellent punch, all spoiling," said Sir Harry.

The three proceeded to the Towers without speaking. Mr. Power and Mr. Ravensworth in silence, Johnny often casting a wistful look back, and asking old Andrew if it wasn't a shame to take him away, to which the old butler answered in the affirmative: "Ay, ay, Maister Johnny, it's a sair trial; yet Scripture saith, obey your parents; mayhap y 'll f cht one your ainsell some o' these days."

When the two gentlemen and their reluctant companion reached the drawing-room, they were beset with questions from the ladies, who had a most imperfect knowledge of the affair.

"It is a dreadful thing," said Lady Arranmore. "I wonder you did not try and stop it."

"God knows, madam, I did try. I had perhaps a hearing from Sir Richard; but your brother's heart is as hard as the nether millstone."

"I fear John is too often mixed up in these disgraceful affairs."

"Why, Johnny," said Lady Florence, "I thought you would have been there?"

"And so I would, had I had my own way; but I was dragged off whether I would or no."

"Then you really think they will fight?" said a lady.

"I fear so, madam."

"But perhaps they may miss," suggested Ellen.

"Little fear of John," said Lady Florence. "But it is awful."

"Indeed, madam, I am—but, God love us! there goes one," said Mr. Power.

In fact, at the moment a clear ring of a pistol-shot was heard; and, ere any one could speak, in quick succession another echoed through the woods.

"I'll run and see," said Johnny; and he was gone before any one could stop him.

We return to the Holly Walk. When Mr. Power was gone the Captain said, "Now we've sent Squaretoes to preach to the girls, we'd better be at work. It's d—bly cold, and will spoil our shooting."

"All is ready," said Scroop, handing him a pistol, while Wilson gave another to Sir Richard.

The Captain looked at the cap (the detonating system, but lately introduced, was all the rage, and the pistols were percussion), then let the dogshead press on the nipple an instant, and, half-cocking the piece, walked with Scroop to his stand. Sir Richard and Wilson also took their places.

The scene was awful! Twelve paces from each other stood the two antagonists; their seconds walked back and joined the rest of the lookers on. Not a word was spoken, save by old Andrew, who stood at the end of the walk, beneath a cypress-tree, almost directly behind

the Captain, some thirty yards off, and kept up an incessant channering, as the Americans call it. The moon shone on one cheek of each of the foes. The Captain had a devil-me-care aspect; and though he was first to stand fire, seemed to reck little what happened. Sir Richard looked very pale; perhaps it was the moon—perhaps the thought he was about to shed a fellow-being's blood—or be hurled into another world. Old Andrew declared he was "fey."

At last, as if tired of the delay, the Captain's voice was heard clear and loud: "If you are ready, Sir Richard, I am."

Sir Richard cocked; the click seemed as if it rapped every heart that heard it, save his whose life it threatened. He raised the piece slowly, and, pointing it at the Captain's head, took a cool, deliberate aim. A slight frown gathered on the Captain's brow, who thus saw his life menaced. Then came the flash — the explosion—and the ping of the leaden ball, which rung through the cypress-tree, making old Andrew "loup," as he said.

"Missed, by Jove!" shouted Wilson. "It was a shaver, by—"

Before he could finish his sentence the Captain flung up his pistol, and, without seeming to take any aim, fired. The flash—the loud report—and then the thud of Sir Richard as he bounded forward, and fell flat on his face upon the snow!

Every one rushed to the fallen man—save one, the slayer, who stood like a statue, with the pistol smoking in his hand. The seconds turned Sir Richard over on his back; in the centre of his forehead was a round, bleeding hole.

One figure left the crowd, and, walking up to the Captain, said in a husky voice, "Drilled, by G—!"

It was Scroop.

"Where?" replied the Captain.

Scroop put his finger to the middle of his brow.

"Where I generally hit. But I must go and have a look. Not the first soldier I've *drilled!*"

With a calm face he stooped over his victim a moment, and then, as he walked away, muttered, "Ha! Dick Musgrave! thou wert a fool to quarrel with me. That shortens our count by one. The grave keeps her secrets!"

"This has had a more tragical ending than I imagined," said the Earl. "Andrew, have the remains carried to the castle. Come along home," to Frank.

"Confound my ill luck!" said Major Forster to the Marquis. "Poor Sir Richard seemed all of a tremble; no wonder he missed!"

"Is he dead?" cried Johnny, running up.

"Deed as a nail," replied old Andrew, and away Johnny ran.

Like a wild thing he entered the drawing-room, and all the ladies gathered round him, pale with terror.

"He's killed," cried Johnny, out of breath.

"Who is killed?" said Lady Florence. "Who, Johnny?"

"I am sure I didn't ask. One is; I saw them carrying him."

"You careless boy," said Lady Arranmore. "Oh! I hope it is not true! Here's some one who will tell us. Oh! Captain Wilson, who fell?"

"Musgrave, of course, Lady Arranmore."

"But is he dead? Oh say no," said Lady Florence, trembling with excitement and fear.

"Did you ever hear of a man living with an ounce of lead through his brains, Lady Florence? No, no; Richard of Musgrave breathes no more!

The Captain will have to fly the country. Ah! here he comes."

As he spoke the Captain, accompanied by Scroop, both booted and spurred, entered the room.

"Oh! John, how could you?"

"Oh! what have you done?" exclaimed his sisters.

"Lord help us! what's done can't be helped. I am sure I am d—d sorry. But I must be off, so no recrimination. Good bye, Edie. Good bye, little Floss. And you, Miss Ravensworth. What, will you not even shake hands?"

"I cannot—your hand is bloodstained!"

"Ellen, if you knew all you would thank me. You do not know that Sir Richard was he who carried you off," said he, *sotto voce.*

Ellen hid her face in her hands, and the young officer turned away and clanked out of the room, bowing to the other ladies.

"God forgive you this murder; and may you never feel remorse for the deed!" said Mr. Power, as he strode past him.

"Ha, my preacher! are you primed, and at it again? Nothing like sticking to one's trade. You to your Bible, and I to swords, guns, and pistols!"

"You will think better some day. I trust God will break your heart in his own time."

"I am like to break your head if you detain me any longer, old Snapdragon! Never you mind me. If I get to the devil first I'll fire a salute when you come! Till then, adieu."

Leaving the worthy man to mourn over his wickedness, our hero proceeded to the hall, where all the gentlemen were grouped, talking to his brother and the Marquis. He and Scroop hastened to the courtyard, where young Wilton stood with three horses, ready sad-

dled and bridled, to carry them and Archy to Leith, where they were to set sail at once for the Continent.

"I'll show my face again when this has blown over," said the Captain, as he mounted. "Poor Sir Richard! I am very sorry for him,—unlucky devil as he was. You will see he is decently buried. He'll have a warmer time of it than we shall, if Power speaks gospel."

"Well, good bye, John. Write to us sometimes," said the Earl, giving him a pocket-book. "This has been a most unfortunate night; it will delay my marriage,—and get me into a jolly scrape, too."

"Egad! I'm deuced sorry; but Ellen won't spoil for keeping a bit. Ha, the needful; I had forgotten that. Thanks—"

"An' I was thinking you would aiblins no be sorry to hae a keg of the gude stuff," said old Andrew, handing a big-bellied flask of whisky. "Gude save us, Captain! yon was a grand shot—puir Sir Richard!"

"Why, bless me, you are a better fellow than I thought, Andrew! Here, Scroop, you carry this flask; we shall be glad of it, I warrant. What a d—d night it is; the snow will be balling in our nags' feet, and leave a track for a blind man to follow. But we must be off. Good night, gentlemen. Come, Scroop, for God's sake be mounted and away, or we shall have the hounds on our scent!"

The horsemen then spurred off, and were soon lost in the darkness. The guests returned into the hall, and went upstairs.

When the Earl entered the drawing-room, Ellen drew him aside, and, in the mildest, gentlest manner, told him how sorry she was that this had occurred.

"You are right, dearest. I am very sorry, but it is done now; it will delay our union, Ellen, for six

weeks, and that will be punishment enough for me. I have your forgiveness, I hope?"

"Ask God's forgiveness, not mine; for this has been a sad—sad evening."

To tell the truth the Earl was little pleased at the part he had taken in it: but he had a hard part to play; brought up without the least religion he had only lately come to see the harm of duelling. Ellen's example was silently doing a world of good, and she saw it, so she said no more: those few words told more on him than a hundred sermons.

The irreligious character of the Towers was well known; and the way in which this awful affair was treated will sufficiently show it, and our readers will see how difficult it was for the Earl to change his course all at once. He had laughed and joked on such occasions before, and he was not so changed yet that he was beyond the influence of the evil current.

As he left Ellen, Frank entered the room, equipped for riding.

"Why, De Vere, where the deuce are you off to?" said young Pringle.

"I am going to Piershill—do you think I am going to sleep here to-night, with Sir Richard lying below?"

"Oh, Frank," said Lady Florence, "I wish you had not put that into my head; I am quite nervous—I wish I did not sleep alone!"

"Then you should make friends with his ghost, Floss!" said her brother, laughing.

Without appearing to notice his remark, Lady Florence prevailed on Ellen to share her room that night.

"I wouldn't be you, youngster," said Wilson to Johnny; "you are next cabin to him."

"Oh, bother it!—Lord Wentworth, may he be moved?"

"No, no, Johnny," said the Earl, who could not help relishing the dreadful jest—"he has been knocked about enough for one night. You may sleep in another room; but I put my veto on moving him again."

"Well, who will come to Piershill?" said Frank; "I am not going to ride alone—Arranmore, come along!"

"Faith, not I—I never feared Musgrave, alive or dead! Besides, I am married; I have my wife to defend."

"Ah, that's well enough; but we poor devils who have no wives must look out for company. Come, will no one accompany me?"

"I think I had better weigh anchor and be off," said Captain Wilson; "I have had far too much to do with it to moor myself here and be snapped up by the sharks! —only for God's sake don't put me aboard that vicious craft young Nimrod again."

"Good night, then—and don't dream about ghosts, Florence," said Frank, as he and Wilson descended. "It is not I am really afraid you know, Wilson; but I want to tell the news at the barracks."

The two young men were soon mounted, and riding along to the cavalry barracks, where the 10th Hussars were now quartered. When they reached the barracks, they found the yard full of men and officers, crowded round a soldier who had lately dismounted.

"Hallo! here's some one who can enlighten us better than this d—d Paddy!"

"How are you, De Vere?—so you've had a duel at the Towers?" said Captain Ross.

"How the devil did you learn the news? Well, that's a nice sell for me,—coming all this way to tell you stale news."

The explanation was given that one of the troopers had been supping at the Towers that evening, and, with

true Irish wisdom, having heard there had been a duel, and one of the duellists killed, without staying to inquire which had fallen

"much aghast,
Rode back to *Piershill* fiery fast."

He could only tell that the Captain and Sir Richard Musgrave had had a duel: one was shot dead, but he could not say which.

When Frank came with the full particulars, he slipped away and had a long argument with a stolid Scotchman, about who fired the first shot.

"Come, De Vere, who was the slain?" said Major Cathcart;—"I will bet five to one it was not John De Vere!"

"You're right;—Musgrave was done for—shot clean through his forehead."

Frank then detailed the whole to a throng of officers and sergeants in the mess room, and did not omit the joke about his riding there for fear of the dead man.

"You should have brought him here," said the Major; "we are not afraid of dead bodies!"

A yell of laughter followed this savage jest; and they then all sat down to a wining party, and drank the dead man's health in silence ere they retired!

Captain Wilson departed next day for the Continent. Sir Richard Musgrave's remains were interred in the vaults at the Towers; and the Earl had some trouble to clear himself of the scrape. The marriage was deferred till the 18th of December, the Earl choosing the same day he had met Ellen a year before at the Duke's ball. A letter from the Captain arrived shortly before that day, saying he was at Hamburgh; had met a delightful young Polish officer, Count Czinsky, who was also there for a similar lawless deed, and they were to proceed to St. Petersburgh almost immediately.

CHAPTER IV.

"From that chamber, clothed in white,
The bride came forth on her wedding-night;
There, in that silent room below,
The dead lay in *her* shroud of snow."—*Longfellow.*

THERE is something peculiarly sad in the reflection that even the works of man are longer lived than himself. The gray castle, the ancestral residence of proud races, outlives its lords; the trees man plants shall wave green long after he has mouldered in the tomb; the very picture exists long after the original has ceased to be known in his place. But it is this very fact that lends so much romance to the old castle—the ancient tree, on whose trunk is carved many a long-forgotten name—the dusky portrait, which retains the likeness of old ancestors, and snatches them from the oblivion of the dead! There is little interest in the new mansion; we could well afford to dispense with all modern luxuries, could we gain some old traditionary story of the house we dwell in.

The Towers was the most ancient castle in all the neighbourhood; it had been brought into the De Vere family through a Scotch heiress—her name had long been joined with De Vere, but the custom had grown into desuetude. The Towers had stood unchanged for many a century; its lords had mouldered away, not so its battlements; its chieftains had died the death, not so its buttresses; not so its four lofty towers, on one of which floated the banner of the family, and in

one of which slumbered the mortal remains of many of its stout possessors and fair mistresses. It had seen every vicissitude of its owners, but owned little change itself. The bride and the bridegroom, the dead had been borne over, and the mourners had trodden its halls. If its walls could have spoken they could have divulged many a dark secret, related many a dark deed. It seemed as if in silent night it mourned the departed, as if in sunny day it rejoiced with the living. These thoughts have been suggested by the lines that head the chapter, and the sequence will show they are not wholly without their meaning.

The old castle was shortly to see some more of the vicissitudes of life—marriage and death, which, like light and darkness, are perhaps the most dissimilar events of life, yet often go hand in hand, indeed so often that in Scotland it is a common saying, "A marriage and a death." It is useless to inquire into the origin of any superstition, it is enough to say without good cause it could hardly have attained the universal belief it does. The author can testify that in his short experience the truth of this proverb has too often been exemplified.

The winter which had set in with a rigour unusual at the early season of November, had betaken itself to more northern latitudes, and a sort of Indian summer had lasted during the two first weeks of December; so mild indeed was the temperature that several trees were putting out an early leaf to be blighted by coming frosts. The 18th of December, the day fixed for the Earl's wedding, opened mild and fine; a good deal of cloud was drifting across a sky of remarkable transparency, which is often the case when the atmosphere is saturated with moisture. The sun was warm, the grass shining in his beams as he lit up the raindrops of the

preceding night; a few swallows, which had not yet taken their departure, darted at the gnats and other insects the unseasonable weather had tempted out. Altogether there was nothing unusual in the day, and whatever man might intend it seemed pretty certain nature would roll her course unaltered, and heed little whether her rain or sunshine fell on the festal day.

At an early hour Ellen Ravensworth awoke; it was hardly light when she rose, and after repeating her morning orisons to God, began to realize this was actually the last day she would rise as Ellen Ravensworth, and really the day of her marriage. A crowd of differing thoughts hurried through her brain. Her life had been like a dream since that morning last year; long as the days had seemed passing, now it was like a watch of the night. It seemed but yesterday she had risen in her own room at Seaview, and not even known him who would that night be her husband. It was but a year ago she had risen with her head full of the ball, and had been marvelling whether she would be introduced to the Earl. Her castle building had for once turned out true, her visions had been realized, and here, on the selfsame day, one year after, she rose in the castle which would be her own that evening. She was about to be united with him she had so singularly met, and so long and dearly loved. It was but a twelvemonth ago, but since that day how strange had been her life! Into that short year how much had been crowded—her introduction to the Earl; the accident of his cloak to protect her going home; the drive in the sleigh; the evening at the Towers; and the memorable ring which still gemmed her finger. Then had come the departure of her noble friends; the fatal but lying news; the fever that had prostrated her on a bed of suffering, and well-nigh extinguished the lamp of life; the journey in

foreign lands; the meeting with her best friend, Edith Arranmore; then the Earl's first visit, and L'Estrange's last heartbroken appeal. And here her thoughts partook of gloom, for she could not exculpate herself of blame; she had certainly cast him off, and *her* change of sentiments had wrought his ruin; he had told her they would, and they had done so. Her delightful visit to the Towers; the pic-nic; the false Italian; her wooing in the cool grot; and then the disappearance of L'Estrange; her awful abduction; the week of captivity; the miraculous intervention of Providence in sending Juana; the dreadful combat and capture of her old lover; his bold and unaccountable escape from prison; then the fearful tragedy of Sir Richard Musgrave's death; the flight of the Captain; his last words, and her secret knowledge of his guilt; her uncertainty of the future; these and many other such thoughts were ample food for contemplation while she dressed. Her joy was darkened with fears. Where could he be? He would not be inactive; still she had the word of the Captain she should be married, and she believed the dark mysterious man. Her joining her fates with such a remarkable family was another cause of anxiety. How soon might he whom she loved so well be cut off? how soon her sisters be withered in their bloom? She could not doubt the Weird! it was like a voice of death in the song of her nuptials. Then too linking herself with such a man as the brother of the Captain, there was horror in the very thought! There was sunshine still on the very clouds of fear, one thought silvered the edge of that darkest cloud. She felt that she might be the favoured instrument of doing much good to the family. Already she saw a change for the better in her dear friend Edith; she had often spoken to her on religious subjects, and at the least she was an

anxious inquirer after the truth. She had the greatest hopes of Lady Florence too; and, best of all, what might her influence do for the Earl? He was young, generous, hospitable, kind; his very faults were virtues run wild. She determined, with the blessing of God, her silent walk and secret influence should guide him,—the Christian wife might do much for the unbelieving husband. Frank too was tractable, and very young; and then there was the Captain, alas! it seemed the despair of very hope to think of reforming him; but nothing was too hard for One, nothing impossible, and she hoped!

From these meditations, and the glorious thoughts of leading a whole family in the right way, she was disturbed by the entrance of Lady Arranmore, who clasped her in her arms and wished her all joy on the auspicious morning. The two friends then descended to the Earl's study, where Lady Florence and Mr. Ravensworth were both present. They were soon afterwards joined by the Marquis, Frank, Maude, and Johnny, making a family party of love and unity. One only was absent,—the Captain.

This happy family circle soon joined the company assembled in the parlour, where a merry breakfast party congratulated the bride elect on the dawning of her wedding-day. The marriage was to take place in the evening, according to olden custom, and a marriage supper instead of the more modern dejeuner. Of course during the day all was bustle and preparation for the coming event; Ellen, however, found time for a walk in the garden with her bosom friend the Marchioness. Their friendship was no common one, and it was the prospect of parting from Edith Arranmore, though only for a short time, that cast the only shadow on Ellen's sunshine of joy. Their conversation was melancholy—

much on the unhappy Edward L'Estrange, and from him they ran on to Sir Richard's death, and then to the Weird and Lady Augusta.

"I am sure, dear Edith, it is unlucky to talk thus on my wedding-day; let us talk of all the happiness of life, and leave its miseries for another time."

"Ah! Ellen love, it is on these seasons of festivity that sometimes I feel most low; before every ray there is a shadow, and it is often that the most happy seasons engender the most unhappy thoughts."

"And why should you think so? this should be the happiest day to both of us; do you remember at Geneva you told me I looked on the dark side, and you looked on the sunny; methinks we are changed, and I now gaze on the light, and you on the darkness."

"Ellen, I cannot deceive you, but I have a dread feeling there hangs something sad over all this; in our family, presentiments are not disregarded; you link your fortunes with ours, and must not smile at my follies."

"Edith, darling, you alarm me; you know nothing, do you? surely you have nothing to apprehend; tell me, love, hide nothing from your sister."

"I know nothing, but Ellen I dreamed last night my departed sister stood by me; in her hand she held a miniature. I looked at it and saw an infant's counterpart,—it was our lost Arthur's picture,—she beckoned with her hand, and when I rose to follow she smiled, then gazing on the miniature she looked so unhappy, and said: 'Lost—he is not there—he is lost!' I woke—I am telling you no fancy—I saw some one glide from the room. I am not easily frightened, Ellen, and I rose—I followed to the door, and there distinctly saw a form like Augusta's glide down the long corridor. I could not sleep again all night, and when I now think on it I feel sure some evil lurks near; why she showed

that baby form I know not; God grant it may not affect my own Arthur; if my child died, I should follow, Ellen,—Augusta need not beckon!"

"Edith, love, we should trust God before even presentiments; if we fear Him all will work together for our good, and even from evil good will spring forth."

"Ah! Ellen, if I had the trust you have; but I cannot overcome my fears; God grant they may all be shadows! But here is Wentworth, he must not see clouded faces, let us try and forget this."

The large ball-room at the Towers had been fitted up as a chapel for the occasion, to the scandal of the prelate who was to perform the ceremony; he considered it almost equal to fitting up the temple of Baal as the house of God! About seven in the evening the chapel was full to the very doors with guests in the most brilliant attire. The Bishop of Edinburgh with his full lawn sleeves, attended by two clergymen, entered the apartment from a side door, and walked up to the altar. Almost immediately after from the right hand side Mr. Ravensworth, with the bride leaning on his arm, appeared, and behind him two by two fourteen bridesmaids, including nearly all the beauty of the neighbourhood. The fairest perhaps of all was the bridegroom's sister, Lady Florence. At the same moment the Earl entered from the opposite side with Lord Dalkeith, who acted in the capacity of best man, or as our southern cousins call it, bridegroom's man, and several other gentlemen, including Frank and the Marquis. The two parties met before the altar, when the solemn service of the Church of England was beautifully performed. Every one allowed that they were the handsomest couple that almost ever stood before the hymeneal altar. And when all was done, the ring given, and the Earl took his young and lovely partner, all who beheld his tall and

stately figure, whilst on his arm leaned his blushing bride, veiled in lace that enhanced the charms it could not hide—unable to contain their joy shouted, "God save the noble pair."

The Earl and Ellen, now Countess of Wentworth, then led the way to the drawing-room, where all her friends crowded round the young peeress, and wished her every joy. In the fashion of the good old days the happy pair graced the supper with their presence, and after the toasts were all given, speeches made and returned, the Countess rose and left with Lady Arranmore to attire herself in her travelling dress. In a short time she again appeared, and the Earl offering his arm to his bride, hastened down stairs to the hall door, before which stood a splendid carriage with four greys, all adorned with ribbons. The Countess gave a last long embrace to Edith, kissed Florence, her father, brother, and sister, and then waving her hand to the other guests took her lord's arm, and hurried into the carriage amid a storm of satin shoes, bouquets, and blessings. The Earl's valet, and the Countess's lady's-maid leaped up behind, crack went the postilions' whips, round went the wheels, and the happy pair set off for Edinburgh, where they were to pass the first night, and soon after to start for the Villa Reale, at Naples, where they intended spending the honeymoon. When the Earl and his bride were off the entertainment at the Towers was kept up with the utmost spirit. The Earl had resigned his castle to the Marquis and Edith, and the former was determined to end the day well, which he did with a vengeance, and it is whispered the noble lord was helped up to his room by old Andrew, who patted him on his back and told him he was the real gentleman, and three other footmen. The Marquis kept up the feast during the whole week following, when the

Towers were, as on all such occasions, open hall, "and while he feasted all the great," we must do his lordship the justice to say, "he ne'er forgot the small." Still this was a cheap charity, for all came out of the Earl's pocket, and while *he* would have felt hurt had it not been so, the Marquis had the extreme delight of winning laurels on another's hospitality. He was determined to end matters by a grand flare up, so he invited almost the whole of the gentry of the surrounding country to the great ball, given in honour of the Earl's marriage. All the rank, beauty, and fashion, not only of Edinburgh but the north as well as the south borders of the Tweed were to be there, and no expense spared to make it worthy of the occasion. On the evening of the ball the Marquis was in high feather; everything had gone on well so far, every one had accepted, the ball-room was splendidly festooned with holly and mistletoe, through whose dark leaves glittered a thousand tapers, giving almost the light of day; the boards were chalked with elegant devices, the tables below groaned with a magnificent supper, the castle was illuminated within and without, and joy was on every face, and laughter on every tongue.

"Ha! Lennox, isn't this grand?" said the Marquis, as he and Mr. Lennox entered the ball-room, in full evening costume. "The room is silent enough now, how different it will look in a few hours, when hundreds are tripping it on the light fantastic toe."

"Indeed, my lord, nothing befitting the auspicious event is wanting now, except the guests; all is prepared, and all does justice to your lordship's taste."

"By Jove, Arranmore, you have lights enough here; it reminds me of the valley of a thousand fires," said Frank, entering in full uniform. "The fun will soon begin now; why bless me, there went the bell,—some very unfashionable arrival."

"Bedad," cried the Marquis, who sometimes used a true Irish expression, "guests arriving and the Marchioness not here to receive them, I must go and hurry her. Come, Lennox. Frank, stay here and do the polite." The Marquis and Mr. Lennox proceeded along the corridor till they were near the Marchioness's room when they heard a long, loud, harrowing scream, and "Help—fire—fire! Oh, help."

"God of heavens!" shouted the Marquis, "what's the matter?"

This question was answered by the sudden bursting open of the door, and the wild figure of the Marchioness, enveloped in flames, rushing madly to seek aid. When she saw her husband, uttering another piercing scream, she flung herself into his arms. All flaming as she was he sprang with his fiery burden to her room, and tearing down the crimson curtains from her bed wrapped his unhappy lady in their dense folds, while Mr. Lennox tore a blanket off, with which he succeeded in extinguishing the flames. Frank, and several others, startled by the scream, entered the room, and every device to alleviate the unhappy lady's sufferings was resorted to. Fortunately there was more than one door man in the house at the time the accident happened, and all that medical skill could do was done promptly and well. The flames had apparently but breathed upon her tender form, but the shock was too much for the nervous system, and when the fearful sufferings gave way to remedies, the harrowing screams grew fainter, and at length ceased, giving the Marquis, who was wild with grief, some hopes: the unfortunate young lady, however, gradually sunk, and about midnight the dying lamp of life expired. Perhaps the most melancholy part was the detailing of the fatal news to the carriages full which arrived every minute with their

inmates ready for the dance, and sadly shocked at the awful catastrophe which had so unexpectedly turned rejoicing into misery.

How sad was the chamber of death! Stretched lifeless, but beautiful in death, the hope of age, the joy of her husband, the kind, the generous—lay unheeding, but not unheeded. Kneeling at the couch's side, the Marquis hid his agony on his lifeless partner's bosom, and wept in uncontrolled grief. The fair Lady Florence, arrayed in her ball dress, wrung her hands and wept in wild despair, with her golden tresses all dishevelled, flowing over her lost sister. There were many other mourners, and no sound but the suppressed sobs of man, or the unconfined weeping of woman broke the gloom of the chamber of death.

How would *they* hear the news? was often asked. Who shall tell the bridal pair? How had laughter languished into groans! how had they proved that in the midst of life we are in death! A week after this event a very different ceremony was performed by the same prelate. The same room, not adorned for the wedding but hung in funeral black, saw a very different sight. In the centre of the chamber, on a table covered with black, stood a gorgeous coffin of crimson velvet and gold, around it in the garb of woe stood the eight pall-bearers. Behind it the chief mourners—the Marquis and Frank de Vere.

The first part of the impressive and beautiful burial service was read by the Bishop—then the coffin containing all that remained of youth and beauty, was slowly and solemnly borne through the long passages hung in crape, through the great hall to the doorway, where a hearse drawn by six horses, with black drapings and nodding plumes, received its lifeless burden; and the horses, tossing their plumed heads, paced across the

drawbridge, whilst the mourners walked in sad procession behind. The white feathers on the hearse told that one young in this world had early run her race.

They had not far to go—the west tower of the castle was soon reached, and again the coffin was borne into the arched room over the family vault, and was placed on the drop. For the last time the mourners gathered round the narrow bed of the loved and departed one. The chamber, or rather cloister, in which they stood, was well adapted for the mournful spectacle. The windows were narrow, the roof low, and supported by ribbed pillars; on either side were low benches, all robed in funeral black; the floor was also covered with black cloth, the walls draped with the same, and the pillars encircled with wreaths of cypress and yew branches; along the walls, through the black squares cut in the cloth, glimmered, ghostlike, the marble tablets recording the names and ages of all the former departed members of the De Veres, whose bones mouldered beneath. Everything was black and funeral-like. The only exception was the coffin, whose crimson velvet lining, gold plates and ornaments seemed almost strange in contrast.

The Bishop continued the service, and at the right place the bolt was withdrawn, and the drop with the coffin began to sink silently to its long last resting place. At this moment a young girl in deepest black advanced, and placed a wreath of white roses on the coffin. Lady Florence, for she it was, then turned away, buried her face in her handkerchief, and gave utterance to her feelings in a paroxysm of tears; her brother Frank supported her from the scene of woe, and seemed himself hardly to be able to control his grief. Gradually the coffin sank, till at last only the white circle of roses was visible; then it, too, disappeared; a crimson reflection from the coffin flushed the black drapings a moment as

it sunk, and tinged with its hue the mourners' faces as they bent over the narrow chasm to catch the last glimpse. Then all darkly disappeared, and then first it seemed as if the last link was broken. The Marquis and many others quite gave way, and sobbed aloud. Then all departed save those whose duty it was to descend, and place the coffin in its proper position.*

The vault was long and narrow; on either side were three rows of black marble slabs, on which were placed many coffins, containing the ashes of former generations. Between Lady Augusta's coffin, which was of white velvet, with silver lace-work, on which, too, a wreath of the flower l'immortelle was still as fresh as on the day when it had been placed there, and the gorgeous coffin of the late Earl, they placed the newly arrived burden. Immediately above the slab on which the Marchioness's remains were placed was a singular spectacle—an empty coffin of an infant! The lid was resting against the wall behind, inside was a soft pillow and satin coverings, but on the pillow rested no infant head—it was empty! This was the house of the dead, ready for Arthur Viscount de Vere, whose remains were never found to fill it. By the narrow bed of all that was dear to him stood the Marquis with folded arms; he then clasped his hands together, leant over the head of the coffin, and for some moments seemed as though he could never leave it. Then, summoning all his resolution, he cried, "Farewell, Edith, farewell! my feet may wander far from thee, but my heart lies buried here." He then rushed away from the maddening scene, followed by the others who had descended with him, and they left the departed alone amongst the ashes of the former dead, till the last trump shall sound, and the mortal rise immortal!

When the Marquis reached the castle, he gave himself

* See Note I. *The Funeral.*

up to unrestrained grief, and refused to be comforted for many days. He then left for his seat in Ireland, taking with him his infant son, the only pledge of undying love! Frank and his sister left for their town residence, and the castle was shut up, old Andrew and some of the servants only remaining. The escutcheon was edged with black, and the old Towers looked as if they shared their owner's grief, and mourned for the dead. Young Wilton had started immediately for Naples, bearer of the dreadful tidings to the Earl and Countess, who would long be in happy ignorance of the sad event.

Thus was another instance of the early death of the family added to the long and mournful category!

CHAPTER V.

"Oh, do not look so bright and blest,
For still there comes a fear,
When brow like thine looks happiest
That grief is then most near.
There lurks a dread in all delight,
A shadow near each ray,
That warns us then to fear their flight,
When most we wish their stay."—*Moore.*

We leave the darkened home of the De Veres, and shift the scene to the Villa Reale at Naples, where the Earl and his bride are enjoying the soft airs of Ausonia,—happy in their own company, and asking for no friend to intermeddle with their joy. More than a fortnight had passed away on their journey, which was performed by easy stages; another week had flown since their arrival at the villa; still they were ignorant of their bereavement. Ellen had penned more than one epistle to her friend, giving a glowing account of their happiness, the pleasures of the journey, the delightful weather, and the beauty of Naples. Alas! these letters would never be opened by the hand she loved, nor perused by the eyes she wrote them for!

It was near the close of a glorious day, when the orb of light was half-sunk in the embrace of the ocean, that the Countess half sat, half reclined on an ottoman in the balcony of Villa Reale,—breathing the soft airs of the Mediterranean, and gazing with delight on the lovely scene. Behind her stood the Earl; but it was not on

the scene he gazed, so much as on his partner, in his eyes,—

"The fairest still where all was fair."

He thought he had never seen her look half so beautiful as on that evening; it was not only the passing loveliness of every feature, nor the grace of every movement, but the soul, the burning intellect that was shrined on her white, broad brow,—which proved how far she excelled in mind her own beauty, as her beauty excelled many another fair being. The Countess was dressed in a light Indian muslin; over her shoulders was thrown a black lace scarf, and her luxuriant hair was confined, as usual, in a frail net, which, with its glossy burden, fell half-way down her back. She rested her cheek on her symmetrically-formed hand; on her fingers shone the plain circle of gold, which told her rank as the wife of him who doated on her, and the ring which she often playfully told the Earl she regarded even with more tenderness than her wedding-ring! Her eye was intently fixed on the west,—there her mind seemed to be also; yet, without being able to explain the paradox, her heart was with him who stood beside her! The sunset was one which northern climes never own,—which northern nations may have dreamed of, but have never seen. It beggared the very powers of description! Those whose eyes have been blessed with such sights must feel how dimly words catch the hues no painter's pencil can fix on canvas. The last tip of the slowly-sinking sun seemed to pause for an instant over the waves, as if unwilling to leave his beloved land to darkness; a broad path of glory glittered along the dancing wavelets,—like a golden highway from earth to heaven; on either side the waters slept intensely blue, for it was only in the rays that the eye could discern any motion in the sea. A

felucca craft was slowly rowed across this blaze of light; its white sails seemed like ebony,—every part was cut out black,—every rope well defined against the glowing background. Around and above the setting orb the scene was still more wonderful,—not a cloud sullied the serene of heaven, which yet,

"Of all colours seemed to be
Melted to one vast iris of the West."

Each hue was so blended and intermingled from the golden sun—so bright—that the last segment dazzled the eye,—to the dark blue sky above, and the indigo of the east, where the moon rose round and full, that it was impossible to detect the exact point where the one ended and the next began, or to conceive how, and where the rosy warmth of sunset mingled, and melted away into the cold, clear light of the moon. One star, first of the daughters of night, shone like a spark of silver in the crimson depths of air over the west; and if the seaward view was thus glorious, not less so was the land. Behind rose olive groves, with their dark-grey foliage, which surrounded Villa Reale, standing on a slight eminence about midway between Naples and Portici. To the right slumbered the white palaces of Napoli la Bella, with their green Venetian blinds, and St. Elmo, rising like the guardian of the fair city below. Beyond the northern horn of the Bay of Naples, Ischia's isle stood out at sea, bathed in living green light; to the left, behind the villa, rose Vesuvius, from whose summit wreathed a lazy pillar of smoke, bent landwards by the faint sea breeze. Still further, the southern horn, with the white houses of Castellamare and Sorrento, like pearls scattered on green moss; and further still, Capri, surrounded by dark waters—a favourite resort in summer for the listless Neapolitans.

On such a scene gazed the Countess; the rosy light of

sunset shed a soft, glowing warmth of colour on her fair cheek, which heightened the beauty of her complexion. The balcony, on which the favoured pair enjoyed this rare evening, was raised some twelve feet above the orange and lemon groves below; through the trellised-work of the pillars that supported its roof, vines were gracefully twined, and hung in easy, inartificial festoons from above; the floor was formed of tesselated marble; in the centre was a table of pietra dura, on which were placed fruit—vases of flowers—amphoras containing wines of the country—a volume or two of poetry—the Leghorn straw hat and white feather, which the lady of the bower had found too warm, and laid aside.

"Ellen, darling, you look sad,—what melancholy thoughts can an evening like this induce?"

"I am not sad, Wentworth; but there is always a sort of 'sweet dejection' in evenings like this; and when I see the sun set I sometimes think, how different is nature from man! How many days of grief and joy have gone down that same western bourne! Bright days like this now declining, dark days of storm and tempest; no trace is left there,—it is still as blue—as bright! But how different with man; when his sun sets there is no morrow—when our joys and lights sink, they leave sad shades behind. Evening always reminds me of death, and this makes me look grave, perhaps,—though it is not my own death, but the death of those I love that I fear."

The Earl had meantime seated himself by his young wife; taking her free hand, he pressed it fondly to his lips, exclaiming, "Ellen, I never saw you look so lovely as to-night!"

"And how fleeting are earth's beauties! I might say the same of you, love,—for never did you look fonder, or seem more loveable. But see how fast the glory of that sunset is fading; even while I speak every hue glows ere

it dies,—'The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone, and all is grey,'—as the poet says. And so we shall fade, Wentworth. All the light on the cheek of beauty is as unreal and fleeting; and unless we have that within us which will burn brighter, like yon evening star, when all earthly delights wax dimmer, what will all avail?"

"You speak like an angel, darling! Ah! look at that star. I love it more than any other, because I think it now looks on the western isles,—our home!"

"Yes, our home,—where all near and dear to us are now;—where Edith is. Oh! sometimes I wish I could follow that setting sun with you, and see their dear faces again. I do not know what makes me think so much of Edith. I sometimes think the spirits of our dearest friends can follow us, and it seems as if she was now beside us."

"You superstitious little thing!—don't you know, Nelly, the Scotch say, 'It's no canny to talk always of one person,' and, 'that ill comes of it.'"

"You have expressed exactly my thoughts; I wish I could think less of her, not that I would wish to love her less, or could do so; but when memory obtrudes her at all seasons, I seem to have a strange presentiment all is not well. Have you never observed, before we lose any of our friends, we seem to have a peculiar tenderness for them? It was so before George died,—on the very day I thought so much of him! I wish I could banish the thought, but I cannot. Dear Edith! how affectionately she bade me farewell! I see her yet on the doorstep, straining her eyes as if to take her last look! Oh, Wentworth, I have a dreadful misgiving! God grant it may be false!"

"Well, Nelly, I never thought you were so superstitious. To-night I expect the mails, and we shall hear, I am sure, that Edith is as well as you."

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

At this moment an Italian servant entered, and apologising for his intrusion, said there was an Inglese who wished to see my lord.

"An Englishman! who on earth can it be?" said the Earl starting up; "ten to one it is Frank on his way to Corfu. Stay here, darling, and I will be back in a minute."

The Earl hastened down stairs, expecting to see his brother; he was somewhat surprised to see young Wilton instead; there was something, too, in his look which did not altogether satisfy him.

"Wilton! why, what on earth has brought you here? Nothing wrong I hope?"

Without replying the young man handed a letter with a deep black border and black seal to the Earl.

"Now God help me, nothing bad I trust!" he exclaimed, but his looks belied his words, and his hand so shook he could hardly open the letter. When at last he broke the seal and read the fatal announcement he almost fell, but staggering backwards he seated himself on a chair, and pressed his hands to his brow. "Oh my God!" he cried, "this will kill Ellen! Oh Edith—poor Edith, and you are gone, and by such a death! Oh Edith! But I must bear up, I must break this as I best can to Ellen." Calling all his resolution to restrain his feelings, he said to Wilton, "Order a travelling carriage as quickly as possible, and tell Pierre to be packed in a couple of hours; I start to-night for England. Ah Wilton! you are bearer of sad tidings."

"I am indeed, my Lord, and grieved am I to my heart that it fell to me to carry them!"

"I believe you, my trusty servant; but you are fatigued and hungry doubtless, get something to eat. Shall you be able to start again in two hours?"

"Ay, my Lord, night and day to serve you."

The Earl then slowly resought his wife; he was many minutes ascending the few steps that led to the balcony, turning over in his mind how he should break the news. But bad news cannot be broken, the instant he re-appeared Ellen saw something was wrong. "Oh Wentworth, what is it? something has happened I am sure!" she exclaimed as she rushed to meet him.

"Edith has been ill, is not expect ——"

"Tell me the worst, hide not anything from me—is she gone?"

"She is!"

"I knew it,—I knew it. Oh Edith my sister! and did you die, and I wasn't there to take a last embrace? Oh Edith!" and she sank on her lord's breast, and wept bitterly.

In two hours the Earl and Countess started for England; after the first burst of grief, Ellen had become wonderfully resigned, and resolved to bear up for her husband's sake. She was dreadfully shocked when she heard the full particulars of her cruel fate, but she sorrowed not without hope, believing Edith rested on the Rock of Ages. Her last walk with her had fully shown her high principles, and perhaps it was her seeming preparedness that first gave rise to the presentiment too sadly realized. After a long and tedious journey they at length reached the Towers, now saddened by associations of the past. Every walk, every room, every tree, seemed fraught with memories of the lost one, and Ellen found by sad experience there is no rank too high for pain, suffering, and death. How different was their setting out and their coming back! But they were united for weal and woe, for sickness and for health, and if sorrow had followed soon on joy—it was sent as a reminder that here they had no abiding city, and to wean them from the fleeting pleasures of earth to the fixed eternal joys above.

Before closing this chapter we must glance on the parting scene of one who has played a conspicuous part in this story. In a large well-furnished chamber of a house near the sea at Hamburgh, Juana Ferraras, or Antonia Stacy as we first knew her, lay on her death bed. The shades of evening were falling, the close of a cold frosty day, the fog lay thick on the waters, and the room was fast darkening like her who lay dying within it. Near her bed sat old Stacy; he was sobered and silenced by the approach of death to one, who if he loved mortal being, was object of that love. Rough as his features were, they looked softened that night; hard as his heart was, it seemed flesh again that night! A rustle was heard in the bed, he looked to see if his patient wanted anything. The dying girl sat up, death had nigh done its work, her face was haggard, pale, and wan; her eyes alone survived the wreck of loveliness, and seemed brighter and more gloriously dark than ever.

"Bring me my child, let me look my last on that pledge of lost love."

Old Bill slided away up the stairs, or as he called them the companion ladder, and hailed a German girl, who soon appeared with an infant child perhaps two months old; she was a fine, bright little girl, with eyes like her mother's, whilst her other features bore some resemblance to those of the De Veres. She presented a strange contrast to her dying parent, as she stretched forth her little arms to her mother. A sad smile lit for a moment Juana's face as she received her in her arms, and pressed her to her bosom—"Farewell, my baby, who will take care of thee when thy mother is laid low? Will thy father ever see his child? farewell, my babe, thou wilt never know a mother's care! She will soon be gone—her last thought was of him who gave thee thy existence! I am sinking—take her away, Stacy; be kind to my child for my sake."

"Cuss me if I won't, Tony. Never mind, old girl, you have had a short and rough cruise, you are nigh port now."

"I would I were near that haven of rest—may the blessed Virgin keep my soul—oh! my child, my child, it is hard to leave it. If you ever see my lord give him my child—tell him I died blessing him!"

"Why shiver my timbers, Tony, if my glimmers haint sprung a leak," said the old man, brushing away his tears with his rough pilot jacket sleeve; "I calculated I had done with tears, but the tanks ain't pumped dry yet."

"I am dying,—I feel the tooth of death at my heart. Oh! Santissima Maria! this pain—it tortures me, it gnaws my very vitals. Oh! that I could die."

"Cheer up, old gal, many a bark's ridden through a worser storm; ye'll come it yet may be."

"No, no—the room grows dark—oh, it is come at last, God bless my child—and Wentworth. God bless * *," with these words she sank back and expired.

"I'm blessed if she haint—ay, ay, she's gone sure enough now—weighed anchor and cleared off, and left old Bill alone. Split my wig if I b'aint sorry—she did peach once—but never heed, she loved him more than he deserved! She is gone now, rest her soul, and her faults. Gad, if old Don Ramond seed her now—it were hard lines for her. I guess she mout have sailed over broad lands t'other side o' the Atlantic, heir to many a league, but all's up now. Consarn me if I don't care for your bit child,—God rest you, Tony, you are in port now."

With these words the old smuggler and pirate walked off to see about her interment. "It is strange," he said to himself, "ever since she seed the Captain she has drooped; she was a fine creature, I'm blessed if she

warn't! If I thought—but no, bad as he is he couldn't hardly! If he had though, he' d better see hisself well away—he'd better give a wide berth to old Bill Stacy—the world warn't sea room enough, but I'd overhaul the devil, wi' his black heart."

CHAPTER VI.

"He knew himself detested, but he knew
The hearts that loathed him, crouched and dreaded too.
Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
From all affection and from all contempt:
His name could sadden, and his acts surprise;
But they that feared him dared not to despise."

The Corsair.

FROM his earliest years the Captain had given evidence of those evil desires and bold licentious passions which his manlier years had fully developed. "The child is father to the man," is one of the truest proverbs, and in John de Vere's case its truth was wonderfully exemplified. The petulance of childhood had strengthened into ungovernable passion; the desire for self-gratification had swelled into unrestrained pleasure-seeking, combined with great selfishness, which cared not how it injured another, provided it gratified its own wishes. Every other childish failing had grown into enormities of vice, even as the letting out of water, small as the stream may at first seem, increases into the turbulent and maddened torrent that carries everything before its headlong current. From a child he had evinced that cruelty of disposition which, though at first it only exercised itself on the meaner creatures, whose tortures gave the young Domitian pleasure, now that childish days were gone, the same increased to a fearful extent on his fellow creatures. He who as a child shuddered not at the sufferings of a fly, a bird, or even a cat baited by dogs, now shuddered not at the death of a man by sword

or bullet, or the sufferings of a woman carried off to gratify his friend, and perhaps got rid of with the same amount of feeling with which he would kick a dog from his door, or slaughter the hound that had ceased to earn his compassion. When as a boy John de Vere amused himself at his home, bird-nesting, cat-baiting, rat-hunting, even cock fights, were a great pleasure. Many of the tenants and retainers at the Towers remembered how John began by glueing walnut shells filled with pitch on the paws of the housekeeper's favourite Tom cat, and ended by tying him on a goose's back and setting them off together on the lake, enjoying the sight of the cat tearing the bird's back with his long claws, and the bird diving to drown her rapacious enemy. Every kind of cruelty, from spinning cockchafers on a pin, and turning birds plucked of their feathers alive into the woods, to the worse scenes of the cockpit and badger baiting, amused him till he became ten years old, or thereabout, when he was sent to Harrow. Naturally of a depraved character, it was his own bad heart that suggested these crimes, and not bad example, for his elder brother, the Earl, had none of these tastes, but spent his time shooting or riding, and gained the character of a famous sportsman in all the neighbourhood. The old Earl, who lived till John was thirteen or fourteen, was often told of these early signs of depravity, but would only call him a "sad fellow," a "naughty, cruel boy," and "he would grow wiser when he got older." Augusta too used to speak often to him, but he was of that age when boys generally despise the other sex, and not only turned a deaf ear to her admonitions, but called her a silly, chicken-hearted girl, and said that men never thought of such things. If his father went fox-hunting, why should he not hunt cats? When John went to Harrow, he soon became the leader and chief-

tain of a set of boys as bad as himself. He was, however, obliged to fag, and his master happened to be the Marquis of Arranmore, then Earl of Claremont, who was an easy-going, good-natured sort of fellow, and though he once or twice gave him a hiding, was on the whole a very merciful lord. Young Musgrave was also a boy at Harrow; and these two, equally bad, Musgrave in the scheming and John in the acting part of their juvenile scrapes, were the chosen leaders in every row. If there was an orchard robbed, windows broken, farmers' fields trampled over—the head offender was John de Vere; the planner of the action, Musgrave. From Harrow, Musgrave and John de Vere went to a military college to prepare for the army, and here they set out on a bolder line. The theatre and saloon were their nightly rendezvous, and men of wicked character their companions in idle hours. Occasionally they took excursions to town, and flew with avidity to every kind of vicious pleasure. They then entered the seventh Hussars together, into which regiment L'Estrange exchanged; and the three young men soon became prime leaders in every folly and dissipation, then more common than now. Their colonel, Sir Harry Maynard, overlooked many a breach of military discipline in consideration of youth and inexperience; possibly the well-filled purse of the young officer De Vere, his excellent champagne suppers, &c., made a balance in favour of him and his friend with the regiment, or assuredly their names would have been erased. Owing to the seventh being quartered at Brighton some time, the Prince Regent became acquainted with young De Vere, and finding him suited to his mind in every way, he made strides in Royal favour, as well from the fact of his brother, the Earl, holding a high position at Court, as from his qualities corresponding with alas! the known character of the Prince.

It was in a row at Brighton, in which both Musgrave and De Vere played a notable part, that the latter first became known to Bill Stacy, and this strange, dark character appeared to take peculiar pleasure in his new acquaintance, as well as to evince such a knowledge of the noble family of which he was a scion, as often to make the Captain open his eyes with astonishment, and wonder who upon earth old Bill could be, and where he had gleaned his information. The old desperado, however, showed himself fully capable of holding his own secrets, and after trying by threats and entreaties, and plying Bill drunk and sober to get at the bottom, he gave it up as a bad job, but continued the acquaintance, as Bill was a fit instrument for many of his designs. The foregoing chapters have fully proved the service Bill afforded to this bad young man, over whose early life we have glanced merely to show the reader that he was naturally demoralized, and had grown in *dis*favour with God and man from his youth up. It only now remains to resume the thread of the Captain's history at the point where we last lost sight of him, and bring it on to the next point, where his fortunes mingle with others connected with our tale.

When Captain De Vere and Scroop left the Towers, on the fatal evening of the duel, they proceeded straight to Leith, whence Archy was sent back with the horses, while our two friends proceeded to embark, having first routed out old Stacy, who had returned from Germany, after leaving L'Estrange at Hamburgh. Bill was right glad to see the Captain again, and he soon found a bark ready to convey them to Hamburgh also. In this ship high words passed between the Captain and Juana, who was also a passenger; however, ere they reached Germany, they appeared entirely to have made it up, though it was a matter not unobserved by several that

from that day Juana gradually drooped, until she ended her life as we have seen in the last chapter. At Hamburgh the Captain soon discovered his old friend L'Estrange, and so close did their intimacy again become that Scroop, who was entirely ignorant of the true facts of the abduction, expressed his surprise at the Captain's having any doings with him. This was the first seed of dislike betwixt the two, and ended in an encounter between the late principal and second, in which the latter was so badly cut by his antagonist—for they fought with rapiers—that his life was despaired of.

The Captain and L'Estrange, who assumed the name of Count Czinski, were fain to leave for St. Petersburgh, not however before the former wrung a promise from the wounded man he would never mention the fact of his meeting L'Estrange again, should he survive and return home. At St. Petersburgh our duo kept up the greatest style, and created quite a sensation amongst the fair Russian ladies.

One day L'Estrange opened an English newspaper, in which was a full account of the Earl's marriage.

"She is married," he cried, "she is married!" dropping the paper from his hands.

"Of course you didn't think the Earl was fool enough to wait till you played the part of young Lochinvar again, and ran off with his Ellen. Why, Ned, you are a greater fool than I took you for! Egad, it sits sore does it, Ned? Take my advice and snap your fingers at a girl who won't take you.—I'll read the account for you—give me the paper, old Spooniana! Why, pest, after all it is as bad for me as you. I lose my coronet—and you your lady love!" so saying he took the papers and read the article aloud, laughing—then tossed it to L'Estrange again. The latter began to read over the sad paragraph, with that earnestness with which we often

read again and again what is the most painful to our feelings. At last he cried out, "Here's something for you—let's see how you bear ill news, who are so ready to read them to others."

"Read away, read away—it's not a little will make my face as long as yours is, Ned! Why, God a' mercy, you look as if you were going to be hung; fire away with your evil reports!"

"'After the departure of the noble Earl and his lovely partner,' (oh! that I should read it)," read L'Estrange —"'the Marquis of Arranmore kept open house at the Castle, and was to end the festivities of the week by a grand flare up, which festive event was suddenly prevented by a melancholy and fatal accident, by which the young and elegant Marchioness lost her life.'"

"Heavens!" muttered the Captain.

"'It may be remembered that only a year ago this lady, eldest sister of the Earl of Wentworth, was married to the noble Marquis—'"

"Read a-head!" cried the Captain.

"'A few moments before the ball commenced the attention of the Marquis and Mr. Lennox, then staying at the Towers, was drawn to the lady's room by screams of a most harrowing nature, and the unhappy young lady appeared enveloped in flames, which were, however, speedily extinguished, but not before the unfortunate Marchioness had sustained such injuries as proved fatal. A short time before midnight death ended her sufferings.'"

"Egad, that was a *flare up!* The Marquis never dreamed of that, I'll warrant!" said the heartless man.

"De Vere," said L'Estrange, horrified at this unfeeling jest, "your cold-blooded ferocity makes my blood curdle. What have you come to when you joke on your sister's lamentable death?"

"By Jove! you take me up sharply. On my soul I am sorry, d—d sorry—poor Edith! I am awfully cut up about her. As I live I meant not what I said. Come, Ned, don't look so savage! Come, and we'll have a bottle of wine, and drown this horrid remembrance. Egad! I am awfully sorry, I am sure I would it had been any one else! Come, Ned, I didn't mean anything, only it came so pat!"

And with these words he actually dismissed his sister's death, and to drown his sorrow plunged into every kind of dissipation for the next three months, until he made St. Petersburgh too hot for himself by shooting Count Strogonoff in an affair of honour, and probably saved ending his days in Siberian mines by a speedy escape in sleighs through Poland to Germany, where he and L'Estrange spent the summer at Baden-Baden, which was even then notorious as a gambling-place. Here the Captain had a run of luck at the roulette-tables, and pocketed an almost incredible amount. Many a hapless gambler was ruined by him, and on one occasion when he had won every farthing from a luckless Baron, the unfortunate loser blew his brains out over the table!

"Kelner, wipe up that mess," said the Captain, with a sneer. "I wish to G— people would blow out their brains in their own houses, and not choose the saloons for such purposes!"*

These two associates in evil soon made Baden too hot for them also, and travelled about till they again reached Hamburgh, where Bill met them with important news from England. After a long conversation with L'Estrange, whose conscience was getting more and more seared from his intercourse with such a reprobate, they both set sail for Scotland, taking Stacy with them. It

* A fact.

was then about the middle of December, a time when Christmas festivities are in preparation—those at the Towers would be of the most private character—and the Captain spoke of showing his face again at home, thinking the duel would be pretty well blown over; however, the large debts he had incurred both in Scotland and England would not so easily be forgotten, and he determined he would not risk incarceration in Fleet Street Prison again, for he had once tasted its joys, until released by the Earl's paying off his liabilities. These, however, had now reached a pass which the Earl would probably be unable, even if willing to defray. The coming of these birds of ill omen so near the home of the Countess seems to bode no good, but we must leave the result to another chapter.

CHAPTER VII.

"'Tis long since I beheld that eye
Which gave me bliss or misery;
And I have striven, but in vain,
Never to think of it again;
For though I fly from Albion,
I still can only love but one.

"And I will cross the whitening foam,
And I will seek a foreign home;
Till I forget a false fair face,
I ne'er shall find a resting-place;
My own dark thoughts I cannot shun,
But ever love, and love but one."—*Byron.*

On a dark night in December—stormy as that eve on which Leander swam for the last time across the broad Hellespont—a small lugger manfully breasting the billows ran ashore near Musselburgh. There was a high north-easter, driving sleet and snow before it, and raising a heavy surf, through which old Bill skilfully ran his craft ashore on the sandy, seaweedy, mussel-beds, whence the burgh takes its name.

"Have a care, you scurvy old devil," cried the Captain, as a huge sea broke over the side of the boat, and christened him with its salt spray—"Easy there—where is your seamanship gone? Egad, I'm drenched like a water rat."

"When you've sailed as far as me—you won't swear at a bit dusting like that—you are but a land-lubber after all!"

"Stow your venom, you old dogfish, and give us a

dram. Ah! here comes another sea over these accursed sands! Ho! well done, Bill; she wore off like a gull: jump out, Ned, never mind wetting your boots. Easy, ho! down with the sail, here we go—ashore at last."

So saying he leaped into the water up to his knees after L'Estrange, and these two on one side, with old Bill and a German boy on the other, shoved up the smack high and dry.

"Well, let those like the sea who do—terra firma for me," cried the Captain, shaking the sea-water off his waterproof cloak. "'The white waves heaving high' be d—d! such a pitching and lurching as we've had—I am right glad to stand on something solid, arn't you, old fellow?"

"I am indeed—and glad to stretch my limbs—so miserably cooped up this last five hours! what an age it is since I last trod these sands! Oh! could I see how this will turn out!"

"Where do you steer for now, and where am I to moor myself? Leastways, not here, if I knows it! for it is rascally cold—we'd best run down after a boosing ken."

"You are for swilling, no doubt, Bill—you drunken old satyr—always up to filling your barrel-shaped body with liquor! but look you, Bill, we haven't come all this way to lush. I must be off to the Towers. Blow this climate, it's always sleeting and raining in this rotten hole! You and I, L'Estrange, will go and meet Archy, he will have the nags ready; and you, old sot, you may go and be d—d, or swig, or what you like, only be here by the time tide is full, and leave Hans (the boy) to watch over the boat. Give him some grog—for it is infernally cold! Come, Ned."

The Captain and L'Estrange walked off and left old

Bill to find a pump, whilst the unfortunate foreigner was left to watch in the sleet and wind which blew most chillily over the Links.

"This is a regular wild goose chase," said the Captain, as he and his friend struck out for a small village called Fisherrow, a bleak hamlet between Musselburgh and Portobello, where Archy was to be in waiting with horses; "and I only do it as a last hope—you must make up your mind for a failure—and then remember you are never to speak of the wench again—that was the promise."

"It was—oh! how my heart seems to sink—in a few hours more I shall know my fate!"

"You will—and I am thankful for it. Your whining and teasing after that woman are enough to drive a saint mad! On my soul I wonder at you—I dare swear she has never thought of you once! Then there's her child, whatever are we to do with that, supposing our plan succeeds? To be sure it's easy giving it a heave into the sea! But yet it is an awful risk! Carrying off Ellen Ravensworth was one thing, but carrying off the Countess of Wentworth is another! Never mind — nothing like aiming high, as Lucifer once did."

"And got a grievous fall for his pains too," put in L'Estrange.

"As we perhaps, nay doubtless, shall!" said the Captain.

"Had we not better think again? it is not too late yet," said L'Estrange.

"It is too late; I haven't come all this way, nor been tossed on that rough sea for nothing! I tell you, however, I shall go and see only; if what we heard is true and she is alone, it is but a whistle and you come up, toss her over a nag, brain any flunkeys who inter-

fere, and away over heath and moor to the boatie good! The sea is a road where it is hard to track a cunning fox like Bill."

"I almost repent I ever came—after all if she did nothing but cry and lament, I could do nothing. Remember what I said, I will try by words, and if she doesn't come round again, I will take her back scathless."

"A fool's errand that—you may do what you like after you have got her. I will be shot if I burn my fingers again for her, or any other woman under the sun! But here we are at last—I will whistle."

The Captain—for though he no longer had a right to the name, we still know him best by it—then blew a shrill whistle. It was answered, and presently Archy Forbes appeared.

"Glad to see ye baith looking sae weel—it's ay a saft night when we are about."

"It is, Archy my boy! it's easy to see Heaven doesn't smile on us—but devil's weather for me! Have you the nags?"

"Surely, surely—they are in yon byre—follow me."

"Who are at the Towers, Archy?" said L'Estrange.

"Dinna speer on me, sir! I have na been there this mony a day. Sin my father was dead and gane—Heaven rest him! the gear a' went wrang, and my mither and the bairns left. The laird wasna pleased, and folk say he kent mair than was right anent your honour's business, and thae——"

"Peace, fool, who wants to hear about your concerns? If you had found out who were at the Towers you might have been somewhat worth listening to. Where is this byre, or what d'you call it?"

"It's near by noo, yon dark house, wi' the reek frae the chimla."

"All right—there's your hire—and now decamp and find out old Bill, and tell him to put the cabin in order for fair freight."

By this time they had reached a wretched stable, or rather cow-house, from which two tolerable horses were produced. The Captain, selecting the best, was soon mounted, and together they trotted off for the Towers. During the long ride scarcely a word was spoken, except now and then a hoarse curse on the snow, which now began falling thick and fast, and balled in their horses hoofs, forcing them to dismount several times on their way. When within a quarter of a mile of the Towers they stopped at a summer-house or arbour, where L'Estrange was to await the result of the Captain's reconnaissance, and if summoned by the whistle ride up at once to the Towers. This bold and diabolic attempt had been undertaken, owing to a statement which had reached the Captain to the effect that the Countess and her infant baby, a fine little girl of nearly three months of age, were then staying in perfect seclusion at the Towers, and the Earl in London on business. Judging themselves able to overcome old Andrew, and any other footmen, they fancied they could get clear off with the lady and her child before any of the out-door servants took the alarm, and then their determination was to set sail for the north of Scotland, where L'Estrange madly dreamed he could excite the old love by his eloquence of woe. He vowed he would restore her safely to her home again should he fail, and then fly to America and bury himself from the world. The Captain took part in the plot, and promised his assistance if the little girl was also carried off—Bill was to take care and keep her out of sight, living or dead—and we are authorized in stating that though he verbally approved of L'Estrange's plan of returning the Countess, unless she chose to stay with

him,—an idea that could only take its birth in a mind maddened by a strange delusion,—yet he inly determined, if he once got hold of both he would keep them out of sight until he could gain a heavy ransom from his brother; for his violent deeds seemed to have excluded all hopes of his ever succeeding to the title even if he got rid of the heirs.

Leaving L'Estrange at the arbour, the Captain wrapped himself up in a costly cloak of sable fur, and rode for the Towers, which he reached a little past ten in the evening. The brilliant lights first excited his fears that the rumour was a false one; however, he rang the bell and waited to see the result. Whilst he is waiting we will take a view of the dining-room and its inmates. About a dozen gentlemen are sitting over their wine after dinner. The Earl at the head of the table—next him the Marquis—all the rest are strangers but two, young Scroop and Mr. Lennox.

"I wonder what has become of the Captain?" said the Earl; "except these scandals, which I hope are worthless, we never hear a word of him, or his friend."

"Their names," said the Marquis, "are, I fear, famous for infamy; while John kept to a few harmless revels, and only now and then an affair *d'honneur*, I didn't care; but shooting fellows at every town, is too wild by half!"

At the same moment the door opened, and a tall figure, so muffled in fur as to be almost irrecognizable, entered. Old Andrew appeared giggling behind.

"Hallo! old fellows," said the figure, throwing off his cloak; "here I am again. By Jove! this snug room, and these merry fellows make me feel jolly. Andrew, you knave, get some hot punch, blest if I am not half frozen,—I will thaw anon and welcome old

friends, wait till I have got some life in me," approaching the fire.

Old Andrew, grinning with joy, hastened to get the punch as he knew the Captain liked it, whilst all his old allies gathered round him, and beset him with questions on all sides,

"Preserve me from my friends; why, you will be driving me into the fire, and one in a family is enough for it. Egad, I am thawing now: how are you, Wentworth, hearty, and you Arranmore, old boy? I was very sorry for poor dear Edith; how the devil did she go and manage to get burned? ah, I see you are still tender about it; never mind, time will cure you of the burn. And you, Scroop: ha! bless my soul, I am gladder to see you well than any; shake hands, old fellow, no malice. And you, Lennox; by Jove, this reminds me of old times. Where's Johnny Ravensworth?"

"He is at Sandhurst, preparing for the line. My father-in-law has succeeded to a nice little property in the Highlands, and Ellen—you havn't asked me about my wife."

"Egad, I quite forgot her. I'll warrant her flourishing from your face;—and your little boy—"

"No, no, little girl; it was rather a disappointment, but she is a darling child."

"Never mind, better luck next time; do you not think so, Wentworth? Come, let us sit down and hear about all my friends. Ha, Scott, I thought I knew you; and Trevors too,—keen after the hounds as ever, squire?"

"As ever, but this weather is bad for us, it's like snow, I fear."

"Like it; it is snowing like fury now. Egad it was balling in avalanches on my nag's hoofs."

"Oh, you rode then?" said the Earl.

"I didn't exactly walk, as my boots and spurs might

have told you, but where I came from I won't say; the fox doesn't show where it earths, and I mustn't show my face by aught than lamplight."

"Then I fear your evil reports are true,—you have been making the Continent too hot for you."

"My evil reports,—if you mean by that my duels,—are certainly not few and far between; but it isn't my fault, if those rascally foreigners will quarrel so. Egad, they will find one Englishman a match for twenty of their cowardly selves. I'll whip them into order. But it is sheriff's officers that I fear here, and when I've had my grog, and seen the girls, I must put a dozen miles between us."

"I am sorry for that; but remember the Towers are safe, no sheriff's officer puts his head in here."

"I know that, but then I have a friend waiting—Czinsky." Scroop looked uneasy.

"Why didn't you bring him here?" said the Earl.

"He wouldn't come; he's waiting a dozen miles from this, and I must soon be off."

"Stay, we can send. Do rest a day or two," said the Earl.

"No use pressing, I can't. I don't mean to be rude, only God knows I can't stop. Ring the bell, Lennox, please; what is that stupid villain Andrew about?"

"Here, Captain, here; het, strang, and sweet, isna that your song? an' how are ye? weel to dae?" said the old servant, bringing in a large bowl of smoking punch.

"Egad, this is the stuff on a snowy night. It's always snowing here it seems. Do you remember the night I hooked it, after nailing Musgrave, poor devil—I hope he was decently interred. By Jove, I was very sorry I hit him where I did; he was a good fellow, and here's to his health, and yours, Scroop; and as you love me don't quarrel."

"If little quarrels make great friends, sharp cuts make blunt ones. Why you drive your rapier through and through a fellow, like a spit through a partridge, and then talk of being good friends again! however, I will drink your health, and the further we fly the tighter we'll tie! I've had enough of close friendship with you."

"Come, I believe you are angry after all. Never mind, *chacun à son goût*, nothing like being on good terms with the man that eats you. Ha! ha! ha!"

After emptying another bowl with the Marquis and one or two others who remained behind to hear the Captain's adventures, whilst the Earl, who didn't exactly like to ally himself again with such a scapegrace, and the remaining guests joined the ladies, the Captain rose, exclaiming with an oath he must be on his travels. He however went up stairs to see Lady Florence and the Countess; the first received him with sisterly warmth of welcome, whilst the reception he met with from the latter was cold, and politely frigid in the extreme. He asked to see the little girl, and was shown by the Countess and his sister to the next room, where in a handsome cot the infant slept. Lady Wentworth bent over it with a mother's love, whilst the Captain looked gloomily on the little features of her, who at any rate would cut him out of his prospects. To the question if he did not think her a lovely child he answered, "Every baby, he supposed, was thought lovely by its mother; however, she did seem much above the usual run of children." He then came back to the drawing-room, shook hands with those he knew, and departed as mysteriously as he came. Mr. Lennox and the Marquis saw him off, and each returned disgusted by his parting sally. As he shook hands with Lord Arranmore he observed:

"I say, Arranmore, that flare up you were to give after

the Earl's wedding was one with a vengeance. Egad it made me laugh in my sorrow for poor Edith."

The Marquis, totally unprepared for such a heartless jest, drew himself up to his full height, saying:

"De Vere, I never knew you before ; henceforth let all intercourse cease between us. Inhuman vampire, thus jesting on the death of your sister. I discard your friendship for ever."

"Nay, but—"

"I hear you not," said the Marquis, striding away.

"Well I'm d—d, that scurvy joke makes every one so infernally wrath ! After all, Lennox, it wasn't a bad one, was it ?"

"Mr. de Vere," said Mr. Lennox.

"Stay, give me my rank, you saucy fool, or by G—d I'll lay this whip about you."

"Captain de Vere then, if you like, a word in your ear ; stay, I must speak low," he said, going up to him close. "It surprises me, sir, you dared to show your face. I have long suspected you, and lately found out your share in the abduction ; you are here on no good to-night, and unless you will give me your word you will again leave these shores before twenty-four hours, I will tell the Earl my suspicions."

"Hark you, my pert coxcomb, if I did not think it beneath me to touch such a reptile as you, I would give you what would shut your mouth up ; you may live to repent this, Mr. Lennox. As for your threats, I heed them no more than yourself, and you have my full leave to proclaim your suspicions, but egad you'll suffer, though I am safe in ten minutes. Who'll track me with the snow falling like this ? Now you may go and be hanged, and hold your secrets if you are wise."

So saying he rode off in the blinding snow, leaving Mr. Lennox petrified. He did tell his suspicions to the

Earl, however, and a watch was kept up all that night, as several others felt perplexed at this singular appearance, and sudden departure of such a bird of prey. When the Captain reached the arbour he found L'Estrange buried in such a reverie his heavy arm only awoke him from it.

"It is useless then. Oh! my God! I am truly most ill-starred."

"If you don't want to be manacled and prisoned you will be up and away; there are a dozen stout fellows at the Towers, and havn't I just stirred up a wasp's nest, —we shall feel their stings if you are not sharp. Confound the snowstorm, and yet it is a friend in need to-night."

Without another word the two remounted, and rode off for the beach, where they found the tide had already floated the craft.

"No fair freight to-night, Bill," said the Captain, "and now let us be aboard and away; it is well, Bill, you know the steerage of these seas; in such a storm of snow as this it is pretty dangerous."

"Never a fear; I can take her through as if the sun was blazing," said old Bill. "The auld country be cussed, and hoora for Italy!"

"Yes, hurra for Naples! No such nights as these, Bill. Come, Ned, what the devil are you dreaming of? Remember you have done with her. Hurra for sunny lands, fleet steeds, and bonny black eyes!"

L'Estrange silently took his place in the small lugger. Hans and old Bill spread the sail, the Captain took the rudder. After one or two sousers, they got under weigh, and steered for the schooner, which lay in the Leith roads, and was ready to carry them to Italy.

Despite the snow, Bill and the Captain sang sea songs, and drank grog, but vainly attempted to rouse their

sombre companion. He was miserable; he was leaving Albion for the last time as far as he knew,—leaving his country—leaving his hopes, his fears, his everything. It was a severe wrench. Bad as he was, he was not like the Captain, without one redeeming quality; amid all the vice, guilt, and blackness of his heart, one star shone—the brighter in contrast to the darkness around it. The snow drifted heavily on him, he shook it not off, he felt it not; a sense of utter sickness and despair was at his heart: he knew all was his own doing—he sighed now only for her *friendship*, only to see her—she could not be his wife now, and he was, by a life of guilt and vice, closing even that door of hope. How could a creature so pure, so beautiful, so refined, look on a wretch like him, so impure, so unholy, so lost to all sense of even shame! Every hour of his present life was adding another league to the distance that severed her from him in this life, as every bound his vessel made was adding another wave to the many that rolled between them. He wished the next billow would gulph their frail boat; alas! it rode them like a seagull, and seemed as if it mocked his misery and laughed at his woe. He was lost—not even the prospect of meeting her above. A gulph—a great gulph was fixed between them; she couldn't love him; he loved her still, though he felt he dared not look up to her, so vile had he become. He was roused from this dream by the clanging of the coupling chains, which showed they had reached the schooner. More dead than alive he was hoisted up, and soon sails were spread,

> "And, shrouded as they go,
> In a hurricane of snow,"

they soon made for the open main. When poor L'Estrange next woke, nothing but waters were around him, and old England, and all good, all delightful, all

virtuous, left on the lee. He then tried to nerve himself up; he drank, he swore like the rest, and even joined in the song—

"Why so pale and wan, fond lover?"

with its ending lines,—

"If of herself she will not love
Nothing can make her."

"Ha! grown wise at last," said the Captain; "'let the devil take her,' and wine and laughter for us!"

L'Estrange's heart still beat true, and though he laughed, sang, and seemed after this the gayest of the gay, all was false. Often, when on his lone couch, on the lonely billow, his eyes would fill with bitter tears as he thought on what he was now, and what he had been; as he thought how sad a contrast his present loveless wicked life was to that of former years, he would cry with Byron—

"I look around, and cannot trace
One friendly smile, or welcome face;
And even in crowds am still alone
Because I cannot love but one."

CHAPTER VIII.

"When hope is chidden
That fain of bliss would tell,
And love forbidden
In the breast to dwell,—
When, fettered by a viewless chain,
We turn and gaze and turn again,
Oh! death were mercy to the pain
Of those that bid farewell!"—*Heber.*

"On India's long expected strand
Their sails were never furled."
James Montgomery.

We turn with pleasure from these dark outlaws to pure affections in pure bosoms. Johnny Ravensworth was growing up all that his father could desire; he was full of the most exhilarant spirits, but had been strictly moral in his private character, amid all the temptations of a dissipated military school. He took away such a character for diligence, good conduct, and steadiness, that the highest hopes were formed that he would prove an ornament to the profession he had chosen. His talents, though not brilliant, were of a high order,—his attainments were steady and solid. To these he added the gifts of excellent good temper, and thorough unselfishness, the mainspring of all real politeness; for though it often happens a finished gentleman like the Earl of Chesterfield may be exceedingly selfish, yet we never find an unselfish man who has not the principles of true politeness, and is not a thorough gentleman. It was, therefore, with feelings of pride and delight that John Ravensworth, as we must

now call him, after passing a severe examination, yet gaining a high place, bade adieu to his masters, with whom he was a great favourite, owing to his steady progress and unimpeachable conduct whilst under their discipline; and to his fellow students, who lost in him their captain in all manly amusements; for, while Ravensworth would never join them in any ungentlemanly, or foolish expedition, in riding, rowing, cricketing, and all the healthful and useful accomplishments, he took the lead that his well-knit frame and unimpaired physical strength entitled him to hold. Assuredly all who saw him as he walked forward, amid the plaudits of his fellow companions, and the waving of fair ladies' kerchiefs, to receive the gold medal for good conduct, and contrasted his handsome face, glowing with health and conscious pride, his manly form proportioned like a young Adonis, could not but contrast health and vigour of mind and body, arising from subjecting them to their proper discipline, with the sallow looks and impaired constitutions of many of his collegiates, which told too plainly the ravages of youthful intemperance on unperfected frames. But who could look for a moment on the bright, healthful, young Ravensworth, and the dull impoverished devotee of pleasure, and not see how temperance has the promise of this life as well as the next? And what young beauty would not rather gaze on him than on those poor debilitated companions in learning? Thus, at the youthful age of eighteen, after having won golden opinions from every one he was connected with, young Ravensworth, with a light heart, bade farewell to the south, and started by coach for the Highlands, in order to spend a couple of months with his father before sailing for India, as the regiment to which he was gazetted was on service at Delhi. The third, and last month of his leave was promised to his sister at the

Towers, and we must say that in the young soldier's breast an inmate of those towers claimed a large part. It was now more than two years since he had seen his sister or Lady Florence, whose fair face and sunny tresses had made so deep an impression on his youthful fancy.

The two months passed away swiftly but pleasantly among the hills, the valleys, and dark rolling burns of the North. In rambles with Maude, or riding excursions with his father over the romantic county of Perth, the days were fleeting away, and he was able to have a week's slamming at the grouse ere he bade adieu to his home. The pangs of parting with his father and his sister, who was now growing into girlhood verging on her fourteenth year, were alleviated by two thoughts,—the first that he had high hopes of a future meeting ere long, when he came back with laurels to be welcomed by his friends and relations as a hero ; the second, that his parting was only the prelude of his meeting with Ellen, and one, still dearer, of whom he thought morn, noon, and even ; and it was that uncertainty if he should find her still the same Florence he had left two years ago—if he dwelt in her heart as she did in his—that made his pulses beat higher. That very uncertainty which like clouds on a sunny day lend their beauty to the sky, for without the shades of doubt love would often lose half its charms. It would be difficult to depict his feelings as his postchaise entered the gates, and drove up the park towards the Towers. The past and the dim future so possessed his mind he could not but lose sight of the present. The two years seemed but so many hours ; it was but yesterday he had scampered across that park, but yet how had those years altered him, and all his ideas. He was then a careless boy, he was now a young soldier just entering on the campaign of life.

Burning hopes of high renown, lawful ambition that pointed on to glory, were his now. In one thing he was unchanged, in one matter his heart was the same as then —in love to Lady Florence. It was then a boyish flame—time and absence had deepened it into real attachment. He had seen much beauty, he had been courted by fashion, but he had never altered in sentiments to her! Now he was about to see her again—would she be the same to him?—had time altered her sentiments? No letter, no message had passed between them all that time; it would have been presumption in him, it would have been unmaidenly in her, to have sent such—that was nothing. He had hopes; she had often and often, when he was a boy, declared Johnny only should be her husband—that she would never forget him. Ah, how would it be? how would she receive him now? would it be with the cold politeness of the world, as if they had never loved, or with the warm affection of those who meet to love again?

Whilst these and many such thoughts occupied his mind, the postchaise whirled on, and ere he hardly woke from his reverie it stopped before the arched doorway. He leaped out, and saw old Andrew, who gazed for a moment as if he hardly recognized him, and then, with a beaming face, shook hands, exclaiming—"God bless you, Master Johnny, ye are grown a braw sodger noo, I wad scarce hae kent you."

Delighted at the warm reception even from the faithful old servant, young Ravensworth hastened up stairs to the drawing-room, where he found his sister the Countess, with her infant son in her arms, and her little Edith Augusta, such was the child's name, prattling at her feet on the soft Turkey carpet. Ellen's warm heart swelled with joy when she saw Johnny, a fine soldierly young man, and as he clasped her in his arms, her eyes filled

with tears of joy, and a sort of bright sorrow as she recollected how George had thus come home, and then parted never to come back.

"My dear soldier brother," she said, "welcome to the Towers. Why, Johnny, how tall and handsome you are grown, and so like poor dear George! sit down and tell me all about yourself, and papa, and dear Maude—and look, Johnny, at baby; I am so glad he was a boy, —how Wentworth did rejoice; and my little Edie, isn't she a darling? Come, love, and kiss your uncle."

The little girl toddled up, and with her outspread arms, saluted him—his was that open face children like.

The beautiful Countess, whom time had moulded into a more lovely being still, gazed with a mother's pride on her fine children, and a sister's joy on her youthful brother. Certainly if there was a happy mind on the face of the earth it was hers then—happy in her husband, who loved her with the most faithful adoration, happy in her children, pledges of that holy tie; happy in her brother—her family; and happiest of all in herself—her own virtues; a mind in unity with God and her fellow-creatures; a heart full of charity; a love faithful and true; one in which her husband's heart could safely trust, above even the breath of suspicion, as the poet beautifully says—

> "And on that cheek, and o'er that brow
> So soft, so calm, so eloquent,
> The smiles that win, the tints that glow;
> But tell of days in goodness spent,
> A mind at peace with all below,
> A heart whose love is innocent!"

Such was Ellen; and if she looked with pride and joy on her brother, who was growing all she could wish, it is not too much to say, he gazed on her with a feeling bordering almost on adoration. She seemed a being almost

too good for earth, and exciting worship as her adequate homage! So far his most sanguine hopes were realised,—at least he had a fond sister there, and he had also the Earl, whom alone he had often seen, and who was the most delighted at his conduct. Still, there was one he had not seen, and it was long ere he summoned resolution to ask even his sister after Lady Florence.

"Oh, Florence is out riding with Wentworth. If I had not had baby to take care of I should have gone too, and you would have had a cold welcome, Johnny! How glad I am I was at home!"

After speaking on many other things, at last the door opened, and a face too dearly remembered appeared;—Lady Florence was eighteen,—still in her teens,—that delightful affix to the numbers that afterwards move less musically! Her face seemed exactly the same,—as did her figure, shown off to perfection by her riding habit, save that the girlish expression was softened into the more sober air of riper, though still youthful years, and the light form more rounded, and developed into the contour of woman's figure. She wore a black velvet hat with a white feather coquettishly displayed, and in one of her little hands, covered with white gauntlets, she balanced a riding-whip, whilst the other held up her train. John was partly hidden by the white muslin curtains, and the young lady did not observe him.

"Oh, Ellen,—you in yet? I thought you would have been out this fine day!" and she was on the point of shutting the door, when the Countess said—

"Why, Florence, love! where are your eyes? Do you not see my brother John, who is just arrived?"

A faint blush for a moment crimsoned her face; then, apologizing for her mistake, she walked gracefully forward, while young Ravensworth leapt up and hurried to meet her.

"So you have arrived, Mr. Ravensworth;—I am glad to renew our old acquaintance."

"Not more than I am, Lady Florence. Why you are not altered the least; I should have known no difference!"

"You flatter me," answered the lady, giving her hand; "but I must say, I doubt if I should have known *you* again. Why, dear me, Ellen, when last I saw him he was not so tall as I am, and now he is a head over me! I must now look up to you, Mr. Ravensworth,—you are grown out of my recollection almost!"

"I trust not out of your remembrance, Lady Florence?"

"Certainly not out of yours, if I am to judge by your shakes of hand. You forget you are now so strong;—you nearly wrung my poor hand off! Excuse me now; I must go and change my habit,—*Addio!*"

The light-hearted girl then sailed away, leaving her admirer in half-hopefulness, half-fearfulness, and scarce knowing what to think.

The Earl's reception was as warm as he had anticipated; and he then left in order to dress for dinner. Several guests besides himself were numbered at the table, and, of course, Lady Florence fell to the care of a young peer, and not to him; she sat a few paces from him on the same side,—just too far for him to address, and not too far for him to listen to. Her partner seemed to pay the most assiduous attentions, which were certainly, as far as he could judge, far from unacceptable, and he was not altogether sorry when the ladies left. When they rejoined them in the drawing-room, he was quite monopolized by his sister, whilst Lady Florence was disengaged; and when, at last, he got free, the same young man walked up to her, just before him, and kept up incessant flirtation. During the whole evening he but once

addressed her, and only received a laughing repartee. Time wore on; Lady Florence was one of the earliest to retire, and by-and-by the visitors departed, and he too went to his room anything but pleased:—it seemed quite certain she had forgotten him. Next morning, at breakfast, he sat next her, and she seemed so like herself again his spirits quite rose; but during the rest of the day she hardly noticed him; and again he sought his couch thoroughly discontented. During the days he was of course carried off to the field by the Earl, who was a keen sportsman; and as a large shooting party gradually gathered at the Towers, his chances for a *tête-à-tête* with Lady Florence grew more and more hopeless. He saw her the star of every drawing-room; she danced and laughed with him, and quite won him,—often thrice in an evening; and then he saw her treating some one else exactly the same; and at length came to the conclusion that she was a heartless flirt! The days hurried by, and soon he would have to say adieu! and sail for India. He tried to reason with himself, how he could be so foolish as to think the reigning belle of town and country, and daughter of an Earl, could deign to look on him, save as on any other young man. But love will not listen to reason,—and he loved! Yet he soon came to the sad conclusion, he would have to leave without even speaking to her on the subject; he would soon hear of her alliance with some noble family, and then he would throw his life away in the first brush with the enemy! All his high hopes of coming home a conquering hero, and receiving as his guerdon the hand of the lady of his choice seemed to "moulder cold and low!" When she saw his death, she would perhaps say, "Poor fellow!—he is gone at last!"—this all from one who had said she would be his wife:—oh, the thought was maddening! Those were her girlish vows,—unstable as the

name traced on the sands,—so her vows were washed away by the stream of years! Oh, woman, thy faith is written on sand!

The most provoking part was, she would often walk with him, ride with him, sit with him alone; she would listen to all his nonsense, and flirt in her turn; and after these interviews he used to return vexed with himself for frittering precious time in folly, and vexed with her for returning it too well.

In this way three weeks passed away. During the next few days he fancied he saw a change in Florence: she was less frivolous,—she seemed more quiet; and he could not but connect it in his own mind with his approaching departure, and said to himself, "She has a heart, after all!" Three days only of his tether remained, when, one afternoon, he found himself walking with Florence alone in the shrubberies; he nerved himself up, and determined he would speak his whole mind, and began by asking her "if she remembered what she had told him two years ago?"

"Indeed, Mr. Ravensworth, if I remembered all the foolish things I said, I should have enough to do."

"Then, Lady Florence, those days are gone. I would I were Johnny Ravensworth again,—could you be the same you were then to me."

"I scarcely understand you. I have always been amused at your pleasantries; I have always liked your company,—but you did not, I hope, imagine more."

"Oh, Lady Florence, do not say so! Have you, indeed, forgotten all you once said,—how often you promised and vowed affection to me?"

"Mr. Ravensworth, I was then a girl, and you were then my playmate. There was no harm, then, in our being so much together, or in all the foolish things we said to each other. We are now nearly grown up; and

I hope your good taste will allow, we could not go on as we did then,—why, the world would never let us hear the end of it."

"Would God, Lady Florence, I was the same heedless boy again! Oh! to grow beyond our childish loves is surely the bitterest part of life! To be brief,—you love me no more?"

"I am grieved to hurt your feelings, Mr. Ravensworth,—I really never dreamed of this! You are a friend,—a near and dear friend,—and shall ever remain so."

"Then, all my hopes sink,—all my fondest hopes are crushed! Oh! why did you draw me on only to crush me? Why did you lead me,—why did you encourage me,—only to blight my best affections? It cannot be you have ceased to regard me! Oh, Lady Florence,—dear Lady Florence, have pity on me!"

"I shall ever regard you as I have done, and still do, Mr. Ravensworth; no one could feel more sorry than I do. If I have awakened hopes I never dreamed of raising, it will read me a lesson to be more careful in future. I sincerely regret I cannot reciprocate your feelings;—may you meet some one who can, and who will make you happier than Florence de Vere!"

The young girl broke away without listening for a reply, and hurried to her room. When she was alone she threw herself on her bed and burst into tears, exclaiming, "God forgive me!—how could I tell him such a falsehood? I do,—I do love him! What made me so foolish, so mad, as to refuse him?"

At dinner they met. You could hardly tell anything was wrong, to listen to those two, speaking so merrily; but, could you have read their hearts,—what a tale of wretchedness was there! Young Ravensworth felt utterly cast down at heart: he had heard from the lips

he best loved to hear the words that spoke his doom! He had proved her he thought faithful, false! His trust in womankind was gone; but he felt he must veil his feelings. "I will show her," thought he, "I can laugh, and sing, and, with false smiles on my face, throw a light on sorrow's dark tide. I will not let the cold world know my misery; but, after once finding the fickleness of the sex, I will not try it again."

Alas! Ravensworth did not know how often a proud beautiful girl rejects the love she would accept from a vanity man knows not—the vanity and pleasure of playing with hearts! Lady Florence felt grieved that she should have dallied with deep feelings, all for the silly pleasure of seeing her powers; but she felt faith in those powers, and thought her smiles would tempt the moth, even after singeing its wings, once more to woo the flame. Alas! Lady Florence knew not there are hearts which, once refused, are too haughty to ask again. Time was short—two days only—and early on the morning of the third John Ravensworth must start. Florence, by all means in her power, strove to rekindle the flame her refusal seemed to have quenched. Young Ravensworth was partly surprised, partly angered at this, to his idea, heartless trifling. A word would have set all right; had he asked again she would have become his betrothed, but he asked not. Had she only whispered, "I do love you," he would again have asked —she spoke not. And thus whilst she fancied he was too proud to ask, and resolved to lower that pride by appearing everything he wished, all to make him ask once more, he fancied it was cruelty in her appearing so affectionate, all to induce him to ask again, that she might once more have the pleasure of refusing, and he resolved he would not give her the chance. Thus a mutual feeling of restraint prevented each of them

from saying the word or making the concession on which their future joy or sorrow depended! Time, which stays his course not for mortal man, wore on; the day—the last day—hurried by! The excitement of packing, preparing, and looking at the beautiful presents showered on him from all sides, partly distracted Ravensworth from gnawing care; yet through all he felt that sinking, aching void within which only one could fill. He had no present from her he valued most, not even a flower! and a flower from her were worth the wealth of Golconda from others. The evening—though he wooed its stay as if it were his last below—passed away with the rapidity happy hours do pass. He sat by her—talked to her; she played and sang to him, and he was at once happy and wretched. One song—

"When we two parted
In silence and tears,"

the latest production of Lord Byron's muse then set to music, she sang with such pathos the tear sprang to his eyes. But afterwards she laughed, and his spirits sank again as she bade him good evening and good bye.

"Good bye; I shall not see you again, Mr. Ravensworth; you will be gone early, I suppose. When we meet again you will be a captain perhaps. I hope you will have a nice voyage. Good bye, I sha'n't forget you."

Poor Ravensworth could only press her hand as she was leaving the room, and offer a little packet, probably containing a costly keepsake, but Lady Florence fathomed his meaning, and said, "Thank you, but I could not accept it, it would not be right; I shall require no souvenir to cause you to be remembered! but if you want one, there is a flower for you." As she spoke she

took a sprig of blue forget-me-not from the wreath that bound her hair, and playfully gave it. She then hurried away with a light step, but a heavy heart. Young Ravensworth stood mute, with the rejected gift in one hand and the flower in the other, gazing abstractedly on his retreating vision of beauty. He thought he heard her sigh. He then slowly retraced his steps, bade farewell to the Countess, and retired to his own room, heavy and discontented. He could not sleep, so fevered grew his head, and thinking the cool night air might do him good, he left the castle, crossed the span-bridge, and sought the Holly Walk. The night was extremely beautiful, the moon walking on high in brightness, the air warm and perfumed as it swept o'er the flower-gardens, and gently whirled the sere leaves from the beech-trees behind the hedge.

What a different scene had been enacted there a few years ago! Awful as it was, to him it was brighter than now, and as he marked the leaves fall, silently but surely, before the touch of the waning year, so, he thought, fall my hopes one by one, till old age will leave me without a leaf to bless the bare branches. He sat down on a bench, and there taking the little rejected packet, he broke the seal, tore to fragments a few lines of poetry he had written and wrapped the little brooch in, and scattered the fragments amongst the dried holly-leaves at the root of the hedge. We are, however, able to state they ran thus:—

When morning is beaming,
And dewdrops are gleaming,
My heart is still dreaming
Of Florence de Vere!
No eye owns such splendour,
No heart is so tender,
All—all I'd surrender
For Florence de Vere!

While this even of sorrow
Bodes darker to-morrow,
Some ray I still borrow
From Florence de Vere;
On my spirit repining
The pole-star is shining,
That knows not declining,—
'Tis Florence de Vere!

When parted our dwelling
By ocean proud-swelling,
Hope will still be foretelling,
My Florence de Vere!
A day of glad meeting,
A voice of kind greeting,
And echo repeating—
"Sweet Florence de Vere!"

Be my cynosure yonder;—
The further I wander
I'll love thee the fonder,
My Florence de Vere!
And vain's fate's endeavour
Our hearts to dissever,
They're mingled for ever,
Loved Florence de Vere!

"It is false! she is no pole-star, and my nonsense isn't worth burning," exclaimed the unhappy lover. "And thou, poor rejected souvenir, no eye shall ever see thee!" dropping it on the ground, he stamped the brooch into the greensward in his fury. He looked up,—you could scarce have told that pale livid face to be the same bright visage that smiled as he received his medal. He arose and retraced his footsteps towards the Towers. Once or twice he fancied he heard a rustle among the branches at the back of the hedge; as he neared the end of the walk the sound rose so distinctly on his ear it made him start. He was brave as a lion, but not untinctured with the superstition of the North. The idea at once struck him it was the spirit of Musgrave haunting the walk where he had been murdered. An

involuntary thrill ran through him; he stood as if rooted to the ground, and he felt his hair somewhat bristle on his head. Had it been twenty robbers he had not known a particle of dread, but anything supernatural was horrid! It was some moments ere he found his voice, and he was almost ashamed of himself to hear how it quavered as he asked, "Who goes there?" No answer came; the rustling came nearer, and through the branches he saw a dim white figure approaching. His heart sank within him, and in a voice tremulous and hollow he asked, "In God's name who are you? avaunt! away! by all that is sacred go!" The cold drops stood on his brow like icicles, and his whole frame shook.

"Hist, speak low—follow me," replied a female voice, and at the same moment the form broke through the bushes. For an instant he thought it was Lady Florence, but no, she was an inch taller at least, and it was not the light beautifully-moulded figure of the lady of his love. "Are you ill? are you glamoured, that you will nae speak nor move? You look dumbfoundered as if a ghaist had speered on you. Quick, follow me, Mr. John."

"By heaven! I did think it was a ghost! What, in the name of God, brings you here in such a place, at such an hour? By my troth I did think it was Sir Richard's spirit."

"Whisht, for the love of God dinna speak sae. Dinna ye ken the place is no canny? Follow me. But you are a brave sodger."

Young Ravensworth felt his blood kindle, and felt angry at his folly in imagining she was a ghost, and eager to disabuse her of the idea, said, "No, Jenny, speak here—it is all trash—what is it?"

"Na, na, not here. Either come, or I maun tell her ye willna come ava."

"Her, who is her? I will come."

And he hastened to follow Jeanie Forbes, who, when the rest of the family had left, was promoted to the rank of lady's-maid to Lady Florence, as a reward for her uniform kindness to the Countess in her imprisonment. Following his guide, he entered the castle by a back-door, and ascended the back-stairs till he reached the door of Lady Florence's room. "Tap thrice," said his guide, and disappeared in the darkness. For a minute he stood irresolute whether he should tap or not. Love overcame pride, and he gently struck the door thrice. A light step crossed the room, the door was opened, and he stood face to face with his lady love.

"Come in; tread lightly," said the lady. "Oh! I am doing very wrong, Mr. Ravensworth! but I could not let you leave this without seeing you once more. It is very wrong—it may be, unmaidenly—I cannot help it! Sit down—there," pointing to a sofa.

Hardly knowing what he did, he sank down on the sofa as he was bid.

Lady Florence still kept standing.

"Why have you brought me here, Lady Florence? For heaven's sake relieve me of my doubts!"

The lady stood speechless.

It was a fine picture: the despairing look of the lover, with his eyes cast on the ground, as if unable to lift them to the idol of his affections; the half earthly, half heavenly look of the lady, as if dying to breathe a word and kept back by an irresistible chain. She was still, of course, dressed as he had last seen her, save that her hair was let down, and in long tresses almost swept the ground as she bent forward, and with eyes swelling with tears, and hands clasped together, exclaimed, "Johnny, I *do* love you!"

As though he heard not, or understood not, he was

silent as death for some seconds, and contending passions strove for mastery in his bosom. The pride, that would rather suffer than bend, fought against the love that would rather die than cause its object to suffer. For a few dread moments they fiercely contended, and, alas for love! pride vanquished, and he replied, "Lady Florence, you have trifled once with my tenderest feelings; you shall not again. Once refused, I am too proud to implore again the love denied me. Would we had not met! My peace is gone,—perhaps yours also."

"Hear me, Johnny—hear me! I repent,—I bitterly repent of my folly. Why this false pride? Your peace, you say, is gone. I can give it back. My peace is gone. You can give it me again. Let me not ask in vain!"

"Alas! it is too late now, Florence!" said her lover, relenting. "I had my resignation penned when I asked you. I had given up all my dreams of glory for you! I have sent the letter stating I am ready for service. At the least, it will be years ere we meet again; but if my Florence will be true, she need not fear my infidelity."

"My God!" exclaimed the unhappy young lady, "I am punished indeed! But, oh, Johnny! it is not too late! it is not! Wentworth has such interest; he will get your discharge. You can sell your commission. What is glory? An empty dream! The mere bray of the trumpet! Oh! stay, stay with your Florence—your beloved, loving Florence! Do not leave me!" and the young girl threw her arms round him, as if she would not let him go.

He felt the embarrassment of his situation; he felt a softness stealing over his soul, he felt his decision all melting away; he saw how much she was devoted to him. He then thought of martial glory; high fame; and his honour; his duty; and then again of love and

home delights! Half he was inclined to throw over all, and spend his life in inglorious indolence,—in retired, blissful, domestic happiness! but again feelings the young soldier only knows—the sound of the trumpet,

> ——— "whose breath
> May lead to death,
> But never to retreating,"

spoke in his ear, and again love failed, and glory won the battle.

"Nay, my gentle Florence, not even love must bring dishonour. I have pledged myself a soldier of the King. I am no more my own. My fellow-soldiers are bleeding, and suffering hunger, vigil, heat, marching; and shall I in indulgent ease stay at home in beauty's arms? No; had it been earlier, before that letter went, it might have been. But regrets are vain. It is too late now! Honour, and glory, and duty before even love! But weep not, my own darling, I will soon come home crowned with laurels; and you shall welcome me home! And the thought of the girl I left behind me will steel my sword, nerve my soul; and in battle I will think both of you and my country, and fight for each more valiantly! And, should I fall, I will die happy, knowing that Florence will weep over her soldier lover!"

"No! no! you shall not, must not go! I should never see you again! They would kill you! If you must go, let me go with you. I will share your tent and your danger, and bind your wounds, and—and—"

The rest was lost in sobs.

The lover disengaged himself tenderly from the weeping girl's arms, and again and again kissing her velvet brow, bidding her farewell, and lingering, and again kissing her, at last left her, with, "God bless you, my own darling! Adieu! adieu! I shall not see you

again; let this be our parting. Your tears might shake my purpose; and even Florence would not wish that."

He then sought his own room, first asking Jeanie Forbes, who watched outside, to wait a few minutes whilst he penned a note. He sat down and hurriedly wrote the verses we have already made our readers acquainted with, from his memory, and, folding them up, sent them to Lady Florence by Jeanie, to whom he gave a valuable ring, as a memento.

Early next morning our hero arose, and, unable to eat more than an apology of a breakfast with Lord Wentworth, who alone was up, prepared to leave for ever. He never came back.

"Give my love to Ellen, and to your sister," he said, as he got into the post-chaise, which was to tear him from all he prized. He felt a choking sensation from grief as he said the words.

"I will. God bless you, my boy! win laurels and then ladylove!" said the Earl, shaking hands.

Just as the carriage was starting Jeanie Forbes hurried up and pressed a note into his hand. He could hardly read it, so dizzy grew his brain. On the outside were the words "Look to my window."

The carriage started. As it crossed the bridge he looked towards the window of the room in which all that was dear then was. He saw a white figure, and a whiter arm that waved a kerchief. He kissed his hand; and then an envious corner of the castle hid all from his view. Again the window reappeared as he drove smartly down the park road. He looked back, his eye fixed on that lattice, and the white kerchief and the arm that waved it! But the horses cruelly trotted on; It grew fainter and further—further and fainter—dimmer still—until not even an eye of fondest hero could detect it any more.

He sank back with a feeling of utter heartbroken and sickening grief—as if deserted by all he loved. Had she asked him then, he had thrown honour, glory, duty to the winds!

As he drove on, the first poignancy passed away, and he began to break the seal of the note he had not yet read. As he opened it a long tress of her golden hair fell out at his feet. He picked it up and pressed it to his lips. The letter ran thus:—

"DEAREST JOHNNY,

"I am punished for my vanity; but let it pass. It is vain to lament what is done You did right. Had you stayed I would not have loved you half as much as I now do, though it would have gratified my wishes. Johnny, I shall ever think of you in my prayers—when tossed on the restless billow—when on the battle-field—when on the sultry march. When at even you see the star we have gazed on so oft, you will think it is the morning star of my hopes! Farewell, Johnny! And whether we meet again or not, our vows shall never be broken. Farewell! If you come back you will find Florence faithful. Nothing but death shall then part us. And, if you die a soldier's death, you shall have it watered with Florence's tears.

"Go where glory waits thee,
But while fame elates thee,
Oh! still remember me!"

Bind my hair in your plume; and, when you fight, remember your

"FLORENCE DE VERE."

We shall no longer spin out this already long chapter, but merely add, the vessel that bore John Ravensworth,

and many other brave and fine young officers, sailed for India, but

> "On India's long expected strand,
> Their sails were never furled."

Whether she ran on a sunken rock, or went "down at sea, when heaven was all tranquillity," or was overtaken and shattered in a typhoon, or fell a prey to the pirates off Madagascar, who even then were not quite smothered, was long unknown.

John Ravensworth was an expert swimmer, and we can fancy how he struck manfully out on the wide waters; and, perhaps, holding high that golden lock, sank with her name on his lips to whom it belonged!

> "There are to whom that ship was dear
> For love and kindred's sake,
> When these the voice of rumour hear
> Their inmost breast shall quake,
> Shall doubt and fear, and wish and grieve,
> Believe and long to unbelieve,
> But never cease to ache.
> Still doomed in sad suspense to bear
> The hope that keeps alive despair!"

CHAPTER IX.

"Yet more! thy billows and thy depths have more:
High hearts and brave are gathered to thy breast;
They hear not now the booming waters roar,
The battle thunders will not break their rest.
Keep thy red gold and gems, thou stormy grave,
Give back the true and brave!"—*Hemans.*

LADY FLORENCE was, as may be easily imagined, totally unable to appear on the morning of Ravensworth's departure. She had watched him, as we know, from her windows, waved her parting sign, and if her young adorer's eyes had been strained to catch the last glimpse of her kerchief, not the less had hers been to see the last vestige of his carriage. In this she had the advantage, as her eye could trace it receding long after he had lost her signal. She watched it till it grew a mere speck on the white road, and at last disappeared altogether. When all was gone the hapless girl gave way to her grief, and mourned her folly in a paroxysm of weeping. Oh! if she could recal that hated day! she had done all, she had banished him, her vanity had its due reward. The absence of Lady Florence was a matter of no comment; she often took her breakfast in her room, and neither the Earl nor Countess dreamed the truth. The latter was unusually dispirited by the departure of her brother, and altogether it was but a sombre house. After breakfast the Earl took his gun, and strolled out after some partridges.

"We miss Mr. John, my Lord," said the keeper, "he

was ay first and foremost wi' his gun; he's a braw young man, and a pity it is he should gae to throw awa his life in the Indies, folk are sure best at hame!"

"You forget, Halket, he likes it. Do you think every young man likes to stay at home like yourself? I am sure if I were unmarried I would have been off with Ravensworth too. What think you of shooting tigers and elephants? better than this," said the Earl bringing down a brace of partridges right and left.

"Na, na, my Lord, scarce better,—besides the het sun; I have cause to know about it, having lost two sons in the Indies of Yellow Jack, as they call the fever; fine lads they were, and most like Mr. John that's gone."

"Tuts, that was in the West Indies, not where Mr. Ravensworth is gone; it's a fine climate, perhaps a little hot, but to a steady young fellow like him there is no fear."

"West or East Indies, it's all one; I say to the devil with foreign lands, begging your Lordship's pardon for the word, and hoora for auld Scotland, na place like hame."

"You had better mind your business, and let Mr. Ravensworth mind his own, and talk less—see, your chattering has put up a whole covey out of shot! do hold your tongue."

Halket saw he had better be still, and sought to remedy his error by more sportsmanlike behaviour, whistled the dogs nearer in, and tried a turnip field where he had marked the birds to.

Meantime the Countess getting uneasy at the continued absence of Lady Florence, went up to her room and, after knocking twice without gaining any reply, opened the door, and was much surprised to find her sister lying dressed on the sofa, crying like a child.

"My darling, what is wrong? why did you not tell me you were unwell? what is the matter?"

"Oh, it's all my doing! poor Johnny, poor Johnny! I shall never see him again. Oh, that I was dead!" cried the poor girl, scarcely knowing what she was saying.

"Hush, dear, do not say so! why, Florence, I never dreamed you loved him—I am sure you let none of us guess it."

"Oh, I know it! it was my cruel, wicked heart.—I did love him, and I told him falsehood, and then it was too late. Oh, I shall never see him again!"

"Gently, love, I hardly understand you; tell me all, hide nothing. You need not fear me, I will not betray my trust."

In broken sentences, Lady Florence then told the whole to the Countess, and when she had finished broke into a fresh flood of tears.

"I am glad, love, you told me all, and while it was foolish at the first to trifle with such fragile things as hearts, it is all for the best. I am glad Johnny showed himself such a true man as he did; I could hardly have thought such a young creature could have decided so properly. And you, darling, did right too not to press him against his conscience. Never mind, it is these partings that make such pleasant meetings! he will come back again, and you shall prove how faithful you are. Come, Florence, cheer up, and you shall find I will not let you forget Johnny. I am sure you are both worthy of each other, you both did right."

With these and many other kind words the Countess cheered her young friend; and, as she had known herself what the pangs of love were, she could the better sympathize as only those who have felt like feelings *can* do.

"You are better than I was, Floss, for I thought my lover was untrue, and you know yours is faithful! come

we must see you smile, you wouldn't like Johnny to come back and find all your roses gone."

Lady Florence was a sensible girl, and convinced that the Countess was right strove to bear up against her feelings. By-and-by she was well enough to come down and go on as usual. She took a walk with Ellen in the afternoon, selecting the Holly Walk, as she knew that was the place where he had last walked. She and the Countess by chance sat down on the very seat where fifteen hours ago he had sat in so dejected a frame of mind. As they were talking, and of course speaking only of the absent one, Florence's quick eye detected the place where the little gift she had rejected was crushed into the velvet soil.

"Why, Ellen, what is this shining so bright?"

"I am sure I can't think; this is where Jeanie saw him sitting so long; you know she said he stamped something into the ground, and tore a letter to pieces—look Florence, love, there are some of the pieces blowing about."

"I wonder, oh, I wonder if it is the little packet I refused last night! yes, Ellen, it must be; see, here is the paper it was wrapt in, with his seal on the wax, the lion rampant, and eastern crown!—quite prophetic—and your motto, '*Unus et idem*,' what does that mean, Ellen? we will ask Wentworth."

The little brooch was soon rescued from its prison, and though somewhat the worse for its rough usage, Florence determined to have it put right again; which was done, and she ever afterwards wore it.

"Wentworth, what does '*unus et idem*' mean?"

"*Unus et idem*, what put that into your head, Floss?"

"Never mind, and don't give Scotch answers. I asked you what it meant, and you, by way of answer, ask me

what put it into my head? I believe you have forgotten your Latin."

"No, no, not yet; it means 'one and the same,' Floss; and now give me a direct answer, and tell me why you want the motto of the Ravensworths translated—ah, your blush tells the tale! never mind, Floss, I couldn't wish you a better lover."

Days passed away—slowly at first, then more rapidly—and in a week or ten days the Countess received a long letter from Johnny just before his embarkation; enclosed was a note to Florence, in which he again declared his undying love, and faith; it was written in high spirits, and more than anything tended to raise those of Florence; after all it was but a year or two, and then they would meet again. She began to look and feel bright once more; yet all her flippancy and flirtation were for ever gone, as the young peer John Ravensworth had been so jealous of found to his cost when he next met her. The day after the arrival of the letter, the newspapers announced that H. M. S. "Recluse" had sailed from Southampton for Calcutta, with a company of soldiers and several young officers. As all regrets were vain now, Lady Florence ceased to grieve over the unhappy circumstance that had driven them apart for so long, and amused herself by following in her mind the voyage of the gallant ship that bore him she loved so far away. She knew too he was thinking of her, and when at evening she watched the western star she often fancied how he was perhaps gazing on the selfsame planet, and it seemed as if an electric chain bound them together whilst severed so far. Often when at night the wind whistled shrill through the lofty towers,—when, too, the equinoctial gales roared amid the surrounding woods, strewing the ground with summer's leafy honours, or whirling the broken boughs across the park,—she would

quail in heart, as she thought how one she loved was tost on the angry billow, whilst the fine vessel was like a cockleshell on the hissing surge, then she would lift her heartfelt prayer, as she lay on her wakeful couch—to Him in whose hand is the broad ocean, who in the wildest turmoil can say, Peace, be still! and commend her lover to his sleepless care. The Countess was agreeably surprised to see how well her friend kept her plighted faith, and she had no reason to fan the flame, which seemed to grow brighter and brighter every moment. She often used to walk with her, and lead her mind gently and unostensibly to better things than the light, and, if harmless, certainly useless frivolities in which she had so long shone the admired of all; indeed her own inclinations were little bent towards such amusements now. Before her parting with John she had been like a child, happy in some fair garden, chasing the butterfly from flower to flower, careless of all save the present moment, forgetful of the past, heedless of the future, without aim or object save pleasure. Now it was as if some one had pointed out the shining light, as did Evangelist to the Pilgrim—now she cared not how soon she left idle follies; she had something to live for, something to aim at, something to think on as a spur to future progress. The past was as a reminder a noble prize was in view, and she pressed forward to obtain it. The change of mind produced a corresponding change even in her appearance. The coquettish smile, the careless toss of the head, the very walk, were either gone or mellowed down; without being crushed the exhilarant spirits were chastened, and no one could have told her to be the same being she had been only a few weeks ago. It was all a change for the better; the Earl loved her more as Il Penseroso, than he did as L'Allegro. The Countess loved her more, and she won the most favourable opi-

nions from all her friends and relatives, who saw the change without being privy to the cause. To use a hackneyed similitude, she had been like the plant, which uncrushed is beautiful, yet void of perfume, but which gives out its most precious odours when bruised and crushed.

About a month after young Ravensworth had sailed the papers reported the safe arrival of the vessel off Funchal in the Madeiras. The ship which had spoken the "Recluse," also brought home letters,—a long and affectionate one to Lady Florence from himself, in which he gave an interesting account of his voyage, and all the wonders of the deep he had seen. Several very nice young fellows were on board, as well as many ladies going out to their husbands or friends; one exceedingly pretty, with whom he was a great favourite, he added by way of raillery, and he was quite afraid she would make him forget Florence. He said he was drest in sailor's costume, and helped the tars in their tasks aloft; they had dancing by moonlight every night—the air was clear and delightful, and they were nearing the Trades. Funchal was a little Paradise on the waters, such flowers and fruits, he wished he could send some of its wines to the Marquis. The stars were magnificent, and the southern constellations daily growing more splendid, and more brilliant than dwellers in the northern zone could imagine. He ended by tenderest love to his Florence and the Countess, and best remembrances to the Earl, saying he hoped to bring home the sword he had given him hacked like a saw in many a stiff encounter. Months passed by, and then a second letter from St. Helena arrived; so far all had gone well, their sails were filled with the fresh trade winds again, after three weeks' becalming in the tropics, under a fierce red sun, vertical, and casting such rays as melted the very tar on the

ropes, and beneath which the waters seethed like pitch. They had only anchored off the island, not being allowed to land owing to its then being the prison of the illustrious Buonaparte. He spoke with great delight about the cross of the south, a constellation surpassing all his powers of description ; "and yet," he added, "when on the line I beheld the great bear's seven stars, magnified into fearful splendour, as if most glorious ere it left its old friends, I turned from the flaming southern cross to those stars sinking beneath the waters, and they alone were dear! the only, lonely lights that still bound us together, and I sorrowed when I could see no more the well-known, cherished cluster that shines on the north, and *my* northern star."

This was the last letter Florence ever received from him ; long ere she read its welcome news the hand that penned it was cold, the heart that dictated it forgotten to throb far beneath the blue waters, lowly laid among the coral reefs. The "Recluse" was to touch at the Cape, but it never cast anchor in sight of Table Mountain. In vain Florence scanned the papers, in vain she read the ship news ; time passed on, and no letter came. News arrived that some terrific gales had swept the ocean at the time the "Recluse" was expected to reach Cape Town, and it was surmised she had run past, and would perhaps steer for Madagascar. Two more anxious months passed away, in which the Earl and family left the Towers for their town residence—still no news of the vessel ; by-and-by the Earl himself, who had been the most sanguine, began to despond, and grow anxious. The papers were full of the missing vessel, in which some of the flower of the land had sailed. Lady Florence grew pale and paler still, as vessel after vessel arrived, and no news of the missing ship. By this time it ought to have long since arrived in India, and doubts became

almost certain conjectures that she was lost. Still it was possible that she might have put in at some out of the way harbour in a disabled condition, and hope still lingered in many a mourner's breast. A war ship was sent out by the Admiralty and scoured the seas in search of her; every port was called at, but without avail. After a long age of suspense, and hope deferred which sickens the heart, the frigate returned without tidings, and the "Recluse" was struck from the Navy List. Lady Florence still hoped, so long is it before we bid hope depart! Ships had been lost ere this for years; he was such a fine swimmer he might have been picked up by a vessel, which had sailed to the other end of the world, or cast on a barren rock, and like Alexander Selkirk might come back after long years. About a year after the search a little vessel arrived at Liverpool with news, the only news ever gained of the "Recluse," and it was only cruel tidings that rekindles dying expectation to quench it again. This vessel had seen the "Recluse" drifting—a mastless hulk, on its beam ends, in a fearful hurricane off the Cape, lat. 40° 7′, long. 35° 13′; not a soul was on deck, and she had neither bowsprit nor rudder. The little vessel herself could render no assistance, though she scudded under bare poles so near as to read her name on the stern. Shortly after she heard a gun of distress, and the last thing she saw was the ill-fated vessel lying in the trough of a monstrous billow which she could never surmount. They fancied this sea had swamped her, as they neither saw nor heard more of her afterwards. They declared her case was quite hopeless, and a worse hurricane they had never weathered.

Such was the news which banished the last ray of hope from every breast;—no, not from every breast, one still madly hoped on. But it was a hope that belied itself, for the despairing Florence showed her belief,

though she owned it not, by wearing the garb of mourning. It was a hope which killed its victim. As the power of swimming holds up the shipwrecked mariner only a little longer on the wide waters, and makes the pang of sinking at last only more intense, as he strikes for the light far in front which he knows he has not the strength to reach, so Florence's only fed her despair. This despairing, unbelieving grief was like a blight at the core; the heart's woe slowly, but surely, worked its desolations on the fair, frail bearer. It was slowly received, but lasting; as the frost at night imperceptibly, but surely, freezes the waters that sleep beneath its chilling breath; or better still, the unseen, unnoticed, petrifying water hardens, chills, deadens, the living grass that grows green on its banks—so with Lady Florence, the grief at first discredited, then doubted, and little by little gradually imbibed into her heart, and believed—whilst she denied the pang that killed her, showed its outward ravages on the pale cheek, tinted with a hectic flush that told its tale, and in the eye unnaturally bright. Her friends saw the dire premonitions of her fate, and her brother took the best medical advice. But the heart's wounds are not to be cured, and when the seat of life is touched, when the root is blighted, woe to the branches!

When the doctor saw his patient he pronounced it at once a lost case; that fast decline no mortal hand could arrest, its stay could only be gained by an immediate removal to a warmer climate. Madeira was first chosen, but as the Villa Reale at Naples had every comfort of an English house the doctor decided on her departure thither, stating that every hour spent in this damp, foggy country was a day lost. The Earl and Countess, deeply grieved not only at the untimely death of the young and promising soldier, who had perished,

"As on that night of stormy water
When love, who sent, forgot to save
The young, the beautiful, the brave,
The lonely hope of Sestos' daughter—"

but also at the near prospect of another loss to add to their woe, delayed not in obeying their medical adviser, and at once started for Naples in their yacht, "The Star of the Sea." The voyage was specially recommended, so they sailed with the invalid about to end her short life amid the flowers and myrtle-groves of Ausonia's sunny clime and favoured shores!

CHAPTER X.

"And one, o'er her the myrtle showers
Its leaves, by soft winds fanned;
She faded midst Italian flowers,
The last of that bright band!"—*Hemans.*

THOUGH we have not mentioned the grief of the Countess for her only brother's death, owing to the greater and more distracting woe of Lady Florence's engaging our attention, it must not be inferred from thence she did not deeply and long feel her irreparable loss. After her husband and children, there was no living being who had so entwined himself round the young mother's heart as her brother had ever done. She had had, it might be said, his entire moral education in her training from a child; he had grown a credit to his mistress, besides combining all, in his appearance and manners, that most captivates woman's heart. She was at once proud and delighted with her pupil:—proud to see her careful and painstaking bringing up had been so well developed, and exceeded her highest expectations; delighted to see how he reflected credit on her family; and, most of all, found an anxious well-wisher in her husband. But alas for early promise! alas for youthful hopes! The pride of her eyes, the idol of her heart, had been rudely snatched away. All her long watching,—just when the plant was beginning to reflect glory on its trainer,—had proved in vain. The child of so many prayers had early been called hence; his sun had gone down whilst it was yet day; in the very spring of its sunshine, at the very hour when his rays were most cherished, the eclipse had come on

and the Countess felt a double pang in thus losing not only her brother, but as it were her son,—for so she almost regarded him. Her father, too, was an object of solicitude; he had lost the prop of his old age, his only surviving son; and so heavily had the loss fallen on him, it seemed as if he too would soon follow the light of his eyes to the tomb.

The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and Ellen was now learning, by sad experience, that to be great is not to be happy,—to be rich is not to be free from care. The Weird was fast fulfilling; one by one, in the bloom of their age, the flowers of the family were falling off. Lady Arranmore was gone; now Lady Florence was going;—who would be the next to follow? These were sad thoughts, which often cast a shadow on Ellen's fair face. She was still so young, but seemed as if she was to be stricken again and again, and when she looked on her lord, her children, and all over whom the Weird had its fatal power, she trembled! Her own sorrows were partly lessened by the task of comforting and sympathising with the griefs of others. She had her father in his sonless woe, and Florence in her declining health; and, like all tender minds, she forgot her own in alleviating another's misery. She had also her children to think of, and almost seemed unable to grasp all her duties, and do all that was required. Had she not had a higher Comforter, she could never have borne up against such a complication of disasters; but she had learned that lesson which is the last a Christian is perfected in,—to cast all her care on a greater than any earthly friend, and to feel sure all was for the best,—good would spring from evil;—yes, often the shadow goes before the blessing, the cloud before the refreshing shower, and the shower before the rainbow! The darkest hour is the hour before dawn; and faith must not tremble

at the dimness of darkness, but look forward to the bright sun that follows.

The Earl had determined to ask his bereaved father-in-law, as well as Maude, to pass the winter with them at Naples; and early in October the whole party started on their travels, proceeding first to Southampton, and thence, by the Earl's schooner yacht, to Naples. This little vessel was commanded by Captain Wilson, who had retired on half-pay from an ungrateful service, and was glad to get such an excellent appointment from his friend. He was much concerned at the altered looks of his invalid charge, and took the most fatherly care of her during the voyage. They had a very pleasant passage after the Bay of Biscay, which kept up its character, and gave them a stormy welcome. It was a sorrowful crew, and very unlike the usual voyages in the "Star of the Sea." Lady Florence and the Countess used often to sit on the poop, beneath the white awning, and gaze with a sad delight on the dark blue billows, as they boomed and hissed past them, with their feathery foam-crests. Beneath that blue, lone sea slept the loved of all! it was on those surges, perhaps, he had striven long and well, but at last succumbed to his fate! Sometimes the wish would force itself on the mind of Florence that the same cruel waves would engulf their frail craft, and she would rest deep under the changing, surging waves; but Ellen used to tell her it was wrong,—to bear was to conquer her fate; when it was Heaven's will, her bark of life would reach its haven of rest; and from this she gradually went on, and spoke so sweetly, so gently, to her young friend, that, little by little, her mind was weaned away from selfish sorrow, and she half resolved to live for others,—not to give way to unavailing grief.

Nine days after they embarked from England, the "Star of the Sea" anchored off the Molo Grande. After

some trouble with passports, the party disembarked at the Porto Grande, from whence they drove to the Villa Reale, so called from the gardens by which it was surrounded resembling those bearing the same name at Naples,—the great promenade in the evenings. About half an hour's drive on the Castellamare road brought them to their destination. The villa stood on the rising ground, sloping upwards towards Vesuvius, which formed its background to the right. Behind it vineyards, orange and lemon groves made the white castellated mansion stand forth gloriously ; and Mr. Ravensworth and Maude, who had never seen Naples before, thought,—as every one thinks,—nothing could be more beautiful! The warm air, and mild sea breezes, for a time seemed as if they would restore the drooping Florence ; but as the winter drew on,—unfortunately rather colder than usual, —her cough grew worse, and every eye saw the swift decline again hurrying its victim to the grave. Lady Florence alone thought she would recover ; alone she knew not her danger,—part of the fatal complaint! Still, it was rather with grief than otherwise she looked on her restoration. All that she had lived for had gone ; life had nothing now to make her woo its stay ; and often, almost dejectedly, she would say—

"I shall get well, after all, Ellen ; I half wish I may not ; and yet there is a lingering love of life, though its bloom is all gone."

"I hope, my darling, you may."

But Ellen knew her hopes were vain ; yet she did not tell her fears to the invalid.

As the spring came on Florence grew worse. At first she made long excursions by sea and land,—to Ischia, Sorrento, Vesuvius, and many other places ; or took long drives into the interior. Soon she grew unable to bear these fatigues, and used to drive along the shore, or walk

to the volcano's side only. As she grew weaker, and her cough became more and more troublesome, and wearing on the system, even these short excursions were given up, and the invalid during sunny days used to be wheeled on a sofa to the balcony, where she used to gaze listlessly on the blue Mediterranean, or converse with her friend the Countess, who scarcely ever left her side. The most skilful medical care now availed nothing, —slowly, but surely, the victim sank! the hectic flush grew brighter, the eye more unearthly clear, the form more emaciated,—and then the patient was unable to leave her dying bed.

Naples is now considered a climate thoroughly unfit for consumptive patients; but in those days climatology was not so well understood as now; and the Doctor balancing the comforts of the Villa Reale with the miseries of hotels overlooked some more important items.

Lord Wentworth, when he saw his sister failing so fast, as a last resource communicated with the then celebrated Abernethy, who, on hearing the case, ordered her immediate removal to Rome, or else inland as far as she could bear the journey. Accordingly a carriage was fitted up as a couch, and the lady removed from the Villa Reale, travelling by easy stages to the ancient mistress of the world. The journey again seemed to feed the dying flame of life, and the Earl with joy beheld his sister able to be wheeled once more to the balcony of the palace which he rented. It was but once she was permitted to do this: never more did she quit her couch. The fatal sirocco blew for three days, and this seemed to dry up the last hope. On the evening of the last day she called her friends to her bedside, and told them she was dying. The scene was peculiarly sad. From their windows they saw the Capitol with its ruined towers in the

last light of day,—and her sun was sinking too! The Earl sat with downcast looks near the foot of the dying girl's bed; Mr. Ravensworth and Maude sat on one side, and on the other knelt the Countess whispering words of comfort in her friend's ear. The expiring beauty sat up in her bed, and, pointing to the reflected beams on the ruins, said—

"My sun is, too, setting, Ellen; if there is one grief in parting, it is leaving you."

"You will rise again, as will that orb, brighter, and in a better land, Florence love! But, oh! it is hard to lose you, though we should not grudge the change from weeping into glory, and life into eternity. Are you happy, dear?"

"I never was happier; could all my life be promised over again, I would not wish to live! to die is far better. I do but go before, Ellen, and I shall see him!"

She then lay down again as if exhausted; her breathing became quicker, as though she almost panted for breath; a light of glory seemed to shine on her face, and her eye looked brighter still; her lips moved as though she were speaking, but no words were whispered.

"Did you speak, love?" asked the Countess.

"I am dying now,—I feel the chain that still holds me here slackening fast. Ellen, love, farewell!—Wentworth,—dear Maude, and—Mr. Ra—vensworth—adieu! adieu!"

The last few words were rather guessed than heard. The Earl rose and hastened to his wife's side; kneeling down, he took his sister's hand, which he pressed to his lips,—it was growing cold. Just then the Doctor entered. He did not speak, but took his patient's hand. The pulse still throbbed, but so faintly it was scarce perceptible. For some time, perhaps a quarter of an hour, they all watched in dead silence. The day faded fast,

and presently a small lamp was lighted by the Doctor. The dying girl once more opened her eyes, which had been so long closed all thought she had gone, but feared to express their opinion. Again her lips moved. Ellen pressed close to her, but failed to catch the words. The flickering flame of life hovered long;—they "thought her dying when she slept, and sleeping when she died." So passively passed away her soul, her form had long grown cold ere they knew she was gone. Not a sigh, not a word, not a breath told the exact moment she ceased to exist! It was on a night as calm as her spirit she died,—and thus tranquilly ended a short, but latterly embittered life.

It is impossible to paint the grief of the surviving mourners; as they stood round the bed where she lay so lifelike they could scarce believe her dead. The "hectic streak" still tinged her face, and a smile so placid that it seemed as if it lingered there to tell the mourners how the disembodied soul was blessed.

"She is happy now," said the Countess; "we should not grieve over her as if we had no hope; but we have a blessed certainty she is happy."

But though she said so, Ellen's heart was too full, and she gave way to a passionate flood of tears, as she kissed the placid cheek of the dead.

We need say no more, save that the loved remains were laid in their coffin bed, the waxlike arms closed crosswise over her breast, and a white rose laid between them. The lid was then screwed down, and the coffin sent to the Towers, where with becoming solemnity she was laid beside her sister.

The Earl and Countess and their companions started for England, and after the funeral of Lady Florence remained in perfect seclusion for many months at the Towers. Grief often follows grief, and woe comes on

woe, as billows roll on billows, and smite the rocks. Scarcely had the Earl and Countess recovered from the grief of Florence's death, when the scarlet fever broke out at the Towers, and seized both of their children. Augusta passed safely through it, but it assumed a more malignant guise with little Viscount de Vere, and with fearful rapidity crushed its victim, leaving the poor Countess almost heartbroken. She looked on Augusta as her last hope left, and the culture of her opening mind seemed almost the only object worth living for, excepting her husband, who was utterly stricken by the death of his sister and their only son, and needed indeed a loving wife like Ellen to soothe his sorrow. Faithfully did she fulfil her vows to love him in sickness and in health, for better and for worse!

CHAPTER XI.

Speed.—"Sir, we are undone! these are the villains
That all the travellers do fear so much."
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Mr. Lennox, about seven years after the events we narrated in the last chapter, was sitting in his drawing-room with several of his children, as well as his grandchildren, around him. Louisa, whom we recollect at the picnic, we should have before stated had succeeded in captivating our friend Mr. Scroop, of Scroop Hall, and rejoiced her lord's heart already with two little Scroops, who promised to prove chips of the old block. Both she, her husband, and the two boys were present, as were also two other married daughters, and the only son, a wild but amiable young fellow at Cambridge.

Although Mr. Lennox had lost his partner in life since we last saw him, the world evidently had run smoothly with him. Through the Earl's interest he had obtained a very lucrative appointment in the Register House, in the Sasines office, and though his hair was sprinkled with snow, otherwise he was the same comfortable looking, self-satisfied man; proud of himself, his house, his hospitality, his children and now grandchildren. He had managed to get off three of his six daughters, one had died a few years ago, and one was engaged to a young Baronet; the youngest, and best looking he destined for some still higher lover! Indeed, Caroline was worthy a better lot than awaited her. She was tall and elegant in figure; her dark hair

almost black, brilliant eyes and high colour gave an air of more than dashing beauty to her face. To this she added the accomplishments of singing and requisite artistic talents, besides possessing winning manners, wit and talent in conversation. Mr. Lennox considered her the flower of his family, the golden cord to his seven-stringed lyre, of which one string was only as yet broken; he was never tired of showing off the painting and drawings of his daughter,—he was anxious to bring her out on every occasion, and took care that everybody heard and admired her singing, her conversation, and her personal charms. Of William his son he was also vain to a degree, and in his bringing up had totally neglected all proper discipline, or inculcating a style of economy in living at all commensurate with his means. The consequence was at seventeen young Lennox was a conglomeration of personal conceit—vanity of dress—and dogmatical pedantry. From his father he had inherited a pleasing exterior, had been crammed with learning from his infancy; and, from all he had heard of the way the young De Veres had behaved when they excited the wonder and envy of all the country round, he had imbibed the idea it was a grand thing to be fast, and so he had shaped his course, quite forgetting he wanted the means to be so, and already he was deep in the secrets of the Jews, and all the vices of juvenile depravity. When his follies were told to his father he would say, "William is adolescent yet—when he grows matured in years he will become wiser. The Earl of Wentworth was also fast when young, but he is now quite sobered down —every young man must sow his wild oats."

"Yo, ho! what a dull hole this is!" exclaimed William Lennox, yawning. "What on earth shall I do with myself? Ha! I know, I shall go and see Mrs. Siddons act."

"William, my son, I fear the stage has too great allurements for your mind! but still I can fancy you must find this dulness intolerable. At any rate you will be earlier to-night, won't you, my boy?"

"I'll see, governor—don't wait up for me; I've got a pass key," and the young man sauntered from the room, leaving the rest to amuse themselves without him.

"I am afraid William gets to no good at that theatre," said Scroop. "What a state he came home in last night! he'll ruin his constitution if he goes on so."

"He is but a boy—he will grow wiser in time—poor fellow, I do feel for him!" said his father.

"You should check it while he is young; look at John de Vere: it was just that way he began his course," said Scroop again.

"I hope you do not think my dear William will turn out so utterly degraded as that most unfortunate and evil principled young man! Poor William! it is only a little harmless extravagance I can blame him for yet."

"Little beginnings you know; watch the first sign of decay, stop the earliest symptoms of decline."

"Have you ever heard any tidings of that singular character?—he was the most dark-minded, mysterious man I ever met in all my travels," said Mr. Lennox, anxious to change the conversation.

"The Earl has I believe caused every inquiry to be made, but up till now without any result. The last, you know, that was ever heard of them was their sailing in a terrific snow-storm from Leith. I say them, for I need no longer hide the fact that the Count Czinsky was none other than Edward L'Estrange."

"You astonish me. Why did you never let this transpire before? does the Earl know it?"

"He does not; to tell the truth my promise not to

let this out was an extorted one, and I consider myself no longer bound to keep it, especially as there is little doubt that both of them have long since paid the debt of nature, and no doubt secured a fearful reckoning with their Maker. Certainly that Weird in the family is a wonderful thing! At first I doubted it—but now we have the evidence of our own senses! Only the Earl left! Lady Arranmore burned at nineteen, Lady Florence dead of consumption at almost the same age, Frank de Vere killed in India at the head of his men gallantly cutting his way through the enemy, and the Captain, as far as we know, drowned years ago! The Earl is young yet, and if he does die so I shall think it the most marvellous curse."

"The untimely fates of that family," said Louisa, "have quite cast a gloom on the Old Towers: the Earl has not been there since the funeral of his son: he has become quite a foreigner. I think he always lives at Naples now."

"How I should like to do so," said Caroline; "that charming Naples—it is my day dream to see it some day. Do you not think, papa, we should make the tour some winter when you have your leave?"

"I should certainly like nothing better, Carry. We have travelled—let me see—through France, Germany, Prussia, the Rhine and Switzerland, Italy alone remains; we shall see, darling. Some day perhaps I may take my Caroline to show the Italian donnas what an English beauty is."

"Louisa, love," said Scroop, "our little boys should be off to bed—shouldn't they?"

"I will take them upstairs, and then we can have some music or play cards. I wish William would stay more at home! Come, dears, it's time to say good-night to grandpapa."

Scarcely had the young Hopefuls departed with their mother than the post came in, and a foreign letter arrived for Mr. Lennox. He broke the seal, and read it with an expression of great joy on his face.

"Whenever we converse about our friends we are sure to hear about them. Here's a letter from Lord Wentworth, in which he says, as he knows I generally take a tour during my winter's vacation, he hopes I will pay him a visit at Foggia, where he is now residing, a lovely place in Capitanata. He wishes us to come by Naples, as he trusts I will bring one or more of my family. I am sure this is most considerate and kind. As I require amusement after my toilsome labours as much as William does after his Cambridge term, I shall most decidedly accept for myself, William, who must see the world, and my little Carry; you will come, won't you, my darling?"

"Oh, I shall be so delighted—I did so wish to see Italy!"

"And then, my love, think under what auspicious circumstances we shall see it with the Earl, and that will give us an introduction to the best society there!"

"I fancy Foggia cannot boast of much society—the Earl is quite retired now I hear," said Scroop. "However, it is an interesting town—there is the Cathedral, with the famous image of the Virgin, the gates of Frederick's palace, and there Manfred won his victory. Then, on the way, you see Naples. By-the-by though, you pass the Val di Bovino—the haunt of all the brigands! you will have to take care of them!"

"Oh! we shall have no need to fear them. I and William armed cap-à-pie—and the postilions and all, will be enough to scare them."

"Don't be over sure, and take some sbirri with you, I advise you; there is Luigi Vardarelli, the great chief

there, and his band is so powerful he will stop whole tribes of peasants, and rob them of their cattle and gold."

"Ha! he will find William and me different metal, if the rascal tries to stop us!"

In this way they all talked on till late. William Lennox was still absent, and the lady part of the family retired, whilst Mr. Lennox and Scroop sat up to let him in. They had a long watch, for it was only after three had struck the young worthy made his appearance in a horrid state of intoxication. Mr. Lennox was really much concerned, and annoyed at this *exposé* of his favourite to his own son-in-law, however, he got his poor boy to bed as quietly as possible, and himself sought Morpheus's charms.

Young Lennox was well pleased when he next morning heard the plan, and declared he would give the Italian robbers cause to know he had not been under Angelo in vain, should they risk an encounter. In a few weeks another letter in answer to Mr. Lennox's acceptance was received, in which the Earl pressed him to come immediately; they were quite alone, excepting the Marquis, who was paying the Countess and himself a visit. In conclusion, he begged Mr. Lennox to call at the Towers and give an enclosed note to old Andrew, who would give him a jewel-case of the Countess's, who was anxious to have them for the spring at Rome; he begged him not to let Luigi, the terror of the Capitanata, get hold of the jewels, and also impressed on his friend the necessity of taking an escort of sbirri on the road from Naples to Foggia. Mr. Lennox was certainly somewhat alarmed at these notices, and almost determined to leave Caroline behind; but the young lady so coaxed her father to let her go, he at last consented, saying only, if she was run off with, and became Luigi's

bride, it was not his fault. The romantic girl was quite ready to run any risk for the pleasure of seeing Naples and Italy, and William was quite wild in his anxiety to show off his fencing, and almost began to wish an encounter with this celebrated bandit.

Early in December, Mr. Lennox, his son, and youngest daughter started in a vessel from Leith bound for Naples, carrying with him the case of jewellery, which was somewhat larger than he imagined, and from old Andrew's special caution not to let his eye off it, seemed to be of immense value. He was rather sorry he had been chosen to carry them, and could not help wishing the Earl had selected any other person in the world but himself. Nothing unusual happened on their voyage. They had rough weather in the Channel, rougher in the Bay of Biscay, and roughest in the Mediterranean, which Mr. Lennox had assured his children would be like a millpond. None of them proved very good sailors, and they were all delighted when Vesuvius appeared and they came to rest in the Porto Grande. Two or three days at Naples quite re-invigorated them after their stormy passage, and they made all the excursions that travellers generally make; saw the galleries, the lions of the city, walked every evening along the Villa Reale, and were quite charmed with the foreign aspect of the place, the costumes of the peasants, and white houses along the whiter sands edging the dark blue Mediterranean. They were also disgusted with the lazzaroni beggars, passport officials, and the extreme dirtiness of the back streets, as well as broiled by the sun. The vettura corriere, or mail coach, started at midnight for Otranto, and as it passed Foggia, Mr. Lennox determined to take it so far. At midnight, accordingly, he and his party appeared at the coach office to secure places; unfortunately, though they got their

places and were comfortably settled, some passengers for Taranto, Bari, and other places still further on the route, also arrived, and they were accommodated with seats, whilst Mr. Lennox, his son, and Caroline in the most surly manner were bid to alight and informed they could not be taken. Mr. Lennox stormed, swore, and threatened the English ambassador should be consulted, and a hundred other calamities occur for stopping him and turning him out in this unjustifiable way. It was all to no purpose,—their baggage was tossed out, and the mail drove off. After a good deal of fighting, Mr. Lennox managed to get his fares refunded, and a couple of hours later drove off in a hired vehicle with four horses and two postilions. At Marigliano our travellers stopped for breakfast, spending a couple of hours in seeing what was to be seen. They again started off with fresh horses to Cardinale, a small village at the foot of the mountains; here they took advantage of a miserable table-d'hôte, and gladly set off again up the steep hill-side. First a valley was crossed full of vineyards and nut trees, besides orchards filled with apples and other fruits, above them spread dense chestnut forests. Crossing a deep ravine, their carriage slowly climbed a tremendous ascent, from the top of which they commanded a grand view of the wide plains of Lavoro, till at last they rested half an hour at Monteforte, and thence began the descent to Avellino through a narrow valley, with the hills on either side thickly wooded with nut trees. Soon they saw the poplar rows which told them their first day's labours were over, and they gladly put up at a far more comfortable inn than they had yet seen since they left Naples. Young Lennox took a stroll through the town, and declared he saw more beauty than he had ever seen in one evening before all his life. Indeed they had an excellent example of the famous beauty of the women of

Avellino in the daughter of their host, a most perfect Italian beauty, who might have sat for the Madonna della Seggiola. Early next morning they breakfasted with all the travellers by the vettura, which had also rested there the first night. During the meal a good deal was said about the celebrated banditti that then haunted the Val di Bovino.* The most wondrous stories of the power and prowess of Luigi Vardarelli were freely conversed on, and Mr. Lennox began quite to wish himself at home again. His son professed to discredit them, and declared his feats must be grossly exaggerated. After their morning meal, a smart drive up the hilly but romantic road brought them to Dentcane; thence they drove to the Grotto Minarda, situate in the middle of cornfields, where they lunched, and then passed on past Arriano, also celebrated for its female beauty, to Savignano, which they reached as the light began to decline, having loitered a good deal by the road. Here nothing but the name of Luigi filled every mouth, and the landlord, anxious to detain customers, assured them it was madness to think of passing through the Val di Bovino that night, as they would certainly be attacked. Having no wish to come to close quarters with the desperados, Mr. Lennox and his daughter readily obliged their host by staying, and William was fain, much against his will, to rest there too. It was a miserable post house —one which is now totally disused,—but the Italian landlord did everything to try and make the evening pleasant, and his daughter, a fine, handsome young girl of twenty, was quite in William's way, and he talked his best Italian to her, whilst his father and sister listened to their host's tales of horror about the two Vardarelli, till they almost trembled with fear. Shortly after their dinner a horseman rode up to the inn, and,

* See Note K. *Val di Bovino.*

dismounting, said he would stay there for the night. Our host left his friends, and was busy introducing his new arrival to the remains of the table-d'hôte served up as new. The traveller, however, appeared exceedingly moderate in his tastes, and hardly touched anything. Mr. Lennox and Caroline could not help occasionally turning their eyes on the new guest; he was short and very slight in form, but his face was perfect; a slightly arched, finely chiselled nose, dark, piercing eyes, and well-made mouth, gave quite a poetic cast to his features, which his long black hair and melancholy countenance fully kept up. He seemed agitated and flushed, as if he had either met with some disaster, or was travelling at an unwonted speed. Mr. Lennox, after he had seen his wants satisfied, with English bonhommie asked him if he would not join their table, and drink wine together? After a little hesitation the invitation was accepted, the young man's melancholy quickly passed away before the social glass, and he began laughing and talking like any of them. He seemed well-educated and connected, and by-and-by let out he was a Count Cesare, who lived near Foggia, knew the Wentworths well, and had just started from their villa at Foggia towards Naples. He said he had been chased by some of the notorious brigands nearly up to the inn yard, and that might account for his excited conduct when he first arrived. The ice being once broken, Mr. Lennox, like all Englishmen, told his new acquaintance his whole history in a couple of hours; how he was an intimate friend of Lord Wentworth; was then going to see him, and carrying valuable jewellery.

The Count praised his judgment in not proceeding further that night, advised him to place the jewellery in the trunk-box of his carriage, and not to carry it inside as he had been doing, and, above all, charged him not to trust the sbirri, who, he said, were usually confederate

with the banditti, and even if not were worthless cowards. He said he could recommend two young men who were relatives of their host, who would accompany them next day through the valley into the Apulian plains as far as Pozzo d'Alberto; thence it was only ten miles to their destination. Mr. Lennox thanked his friend much, and willingly followed his advice. The two young men were introduced by their host, and looked well able to defend their charge, armed as they were with pistols and stilettos. Mr. Lennox also took pistols, and his son carried a sword, so they were well prepared at least, and the Count told them they would probably have no need of weapons, only prevention was better than cure. Mutually pleased, they separated for their different apartments, bestowing their praises on the accommodation, Mr. Lennox to dream of the Earl's reception of him and his children, William of the fair Giulia with whom he had lost his heart, Caroline of brigands, and the Count, as he called himself, not to dream, but to think what a gull he had got hold of in Mr. Lennox! Count Cesare was in fact only a member of the Vardarelli's band, who had thus gleaned all the information he wanted for Luigi, and left two of his men to act the part of guardians. The landlord and his daughter Giulia were old hands at their trade, and would probably share their guest's plunder.

Early next morning, after a most unpleasant night, owing to the musquitoes and other insects that prevented them from almost closing their eyes, our travellers arose, little dreaming what was in store for them. They were disappointed to find that their friend, the Count, had left for Naples at an early hour—so he bade the innkeeper say—as they had anticipated his pleasant company at breakfast. Mr. Lennox then had to pay a most extortionate charge, notwithstanding his utmost efforts

to reduce it. William after actually prevailing on his inamorata to bestow a parting salute, buckled on his sword, loosened it in the scabbard, and felt himself a hero. The two false guards mounted behind. Mr. Lennox handed his daughter into the carriage, and after his son, who talked loud of his hopes for a brush with the miscreants, got in himself also, the postilions whipped up and began the steep descent into the Val di Bovino, shortly after leaving Montaguto.

The early sun was bright and warm, the air clear, the scenery exquisite; every one felt in grand spirits as they trotted down the narrow defile through corn-fields and hemp-fields, with the river Cervaro gushing by. Soon the mountains, so steep as to seem inaccessible, closed nearer in, dense woods on either side of acacia and other trees almost shut out the daylight. When they were perhaps more than half way through, a pistol-shot resounded through the woods! In an instant the postilions drew up their horses with a loud cry—"The bandits—the bandits—the Vardarelli—we are undone!"*

"Drive on, drive on, for the love of heaven," cried Mr. Lennox, pale with fear—but his voice was unheard.

Another pistol-shot resounded, and this close by; its aim was fatal to the foremost postilion, who fell a corpse off his terrified horse. The other man leapt down and fled into the woods like a hare. William leapt out too, and drawing his sword whirled it round his head, crying to their guards to fight, to do their duty, and defend his sister! Alas! the guards were not there—they too had disappeared! He now looked despairingly for aid; his father, poor old man, was white as a sheet, and trembling with fear held the pistol cocked in one hand, and supported Caroline, who was in a dead swoon, in the other. The postilions—one was dead, the other flown! What

See Note L. *The Vardarelli.*

should he do to save his family from their as yet unseen foe? A thought struck him, he would drive on! Just as he was about to put his thought into execution, and drive on the horses, which stood as if petrified too—a confused sound of trampling of steeds—oaths of men, clashing of arms—rose on every side, and as if by magic the carriage was surrounded by at least forty brigands. One, a dark-looking man, but evidently not a native, was conspicuous from the coal-black steed he bestrode, and his commanding manner. This was Luigi Vardarelli. Near him rode another singularly resembling him: this was Adrian Vardarelli; he saw another there he least expected to see—their friend the Count, of last evening! Close to this man rode two others, their quondam guardians! The remaining robbers were all fierce, bloodthirsty looking men. All this was seen in a moment by the unfortunate youth. He saw they were betrayed—he saw his death was near—and with a high resolve we could scarcely have thought the young man capable of feeling, he determined to try and save his father and sister by self-devotion.

"Gentlemen," he cried in Italian, "you could not hurt my aged parent, nor helpless sister! I think too highly of you—you are too noble to do so! take all we have—take me—and have your vengeance on my head, but spare my father,—spare my sister! You too, sir," addressing the false Count, "who have shared our hospitality, turn not your hand against them."

Adrian Vardarelli seemed moved by the young man's speech, and said something in his favour to the chieftain; but alas! in his face there was not the shadow of mercy. He said something aside to the false Count, who advancing, leapt off his horse and gave a command in Italian to the two who had been their guards, who instantly cutting the traces, smote the liberated horses,

which set off at full speed, leaving the carriage alone on the road. The bandit then walking up struck the unfortunate young Lennox a blow on his cheek with the side of his sword, and commanded him to draw. Smarting with the blow, which drew blood, and still more with the insult, William rushed on his cool, wary antagonist with blind fury. The conflict was short; all Angelo's tuition went for nothing against the robber, who was a master in the art of fencing. In less than three passes he disarmed his foe, and stepping forward ran his vengeful blade through and through William Lennox's heart! Then wiping the blade on his fallen victim's clothes, he walked to his captain for further orders.

CHAPTER XII.

"Of horrid stabs in groves forlorn,
And murders done in caves."—*Hood.*

FROM the time he heard the first shot up to the moment he saw his son pierced by the brigand's weapon, Mr. Lennox had sat as if he was an effigy and not a man, the father of him who had nobly died for him, and the senseless girl who had sunk against him in a swoon. Whether it was abject fear, or whether he was stunned by the horrid murder of his son and the fainting state of Caroline, or whether both preyed on the old man's mind we know not, but certain it is he sat as if powerless, insensible, crushed.

"To work, comrades," cried the captain of the band; "you, my Pedro, have ably spun yon fiery coxcomb, but more remains to be done. Pedro, lay a hand on the jewels, you know where they lie. I myself will see what the old dotard is about."

Whilst Pedro hastened to the trunk where the jewels were hidden, Luigi dismounted; followed by Adrian and several others, he approached the carriage-door. Roused for an instant from his fearful lethargy, Mr. Lennox aimed the pistol he held in his hand at the first intruder's head, and fired, narrowly missing Luigi, who little expected such a welcome. As it was, the smoke so clouded him, suffocating him with its sulphurous vapour, that for an instant he was as it were knocked back.

"The old devil! who would have thought of that? Iddio! I had a narrow escape: the rascal! he shall suffer for it!" exclaimed the irate chieftain, as he rushed forward at the old gentleman, who had after this sudden outburst again relapsed into dastardly inaction. "You old viper! I've got you now, and by Heaven I'll teach you to fire at me that way! here, Adrian, help us to drag the venomous old toad from his hole."

Without waiting for the assistance he asked, Luigi, seizing the old man by the shoulder, dragged him forth notwithstanding his cries for mercy.

"Pity my grey hairs! pity a father you have left sonless! spare me, oh! gentlemen, for God's sake! mercy! misericordia! for the sake of God—for the Virgin!"

"Cease whining in your villainous Italian, and ask for mercy in good English, you drivelling old poltroon," cried Luigi, in that tongue, for he had hitherto spoken in Italian.

He still held his prostrate foe by the arm with an iron grip, menacing death with his naked dagger. Had it not been for the dire reality and fatal signs of murder around, there was something almost ludicrous in the scene. Lying on his back, with his grey hair tangled and torn by his rough usage, his hands clasped together in beseeching agony, tears of terror streaming down his face, his countenance betraying awful fright, Mr. Lennox presented a remarkable contrast to the stern brigand, who, kneeling with one knee on his fallen captive, played with a shining dagger in one hand, whilst with the other he held his prisoner firm. The robber's countenance showed mingled contempt for his antagonist, if a resistless prisoner may so be called, and joy at having thus a foe in his power. But the scene was too terribly bloody for a smile; the father's foot

rested against the body of his dead son, a little further off lay the corpse of the postilion with his limbs drawn together in the agony of his dying struggle, whilst fierce men on all sides cursed and swore as they dragged forth the baggage from the carriage, rudely breaking the lids, and scattering the articles on the road in their search for gold or precious things. Some of the band stood mute admirers of the scene of carnage and rapine, others were passionless lookers on, whilst one appeared to regard with horror the whole outrage. This solitary instance amongst a band infamous for its butcheries was Adrian Vardarelli. Leaning against his horse from which he had dismounted, he regarded the various incidents with a look approaching to disgust,—once when he saw the face of Mr. Lennox as he was torn from his carriage, this look changed to one of intense surprise; but again he reposed into his former state of indolent disapproval. When Mr. Lennox heard his native tongue spoken where he least expected it, and by one he least imagined to know it, a sudden feeling of joy thrilled through him.

An Englishman, then, the captain of the band was, he knew it by his accent; he knew that some of the fiercest brigands had been his countrymen, but he felt a conviction, bad as he was, brutal as was his conduct, there was yet an appeal to his mercy as a fellow countryman, and he would try if there was not in his black heart a chord that responded.

"Capitano," he cried, "I am an Englishman, so are you. Oh! for the sake of our mutual land—for the love of God and man—for the sake of England, your native home,—spare me, spare my daughter; take my money, take all, but save my life."

"Look at me, you cowardly old rascal, look at me; do you not know me? then ask yourself if you have cause

to expect mercy; no, by G— I told you a reckoning time would come, it has come, and d—n me if I let it slip."

It is not in the power of language to tell the surprise of Mr. Lennox, as he gazed on the speaker, and in Luigi Vardarelli, the terror of the Capitanata, the scourge of the Abruzzi and all the south of Italy, beheld his old acquaintance Captain John de Vere.

"Ha! Lennox, old boy," continued the robber, "you little thought Luigi Vardarelli was your old friend the Captain. Egad I little thought, when Pedro brought me the news to day an old gentleman, his son and daughter, with rich jewels, passed this way, that it was my old friend Lennox. I told you a dozen years ago you might live to repent your words to me that night; you have lived to do so, and by the Almighty you shall repent it,—your life alone shall satisfy me."

Poor Mr. Lennox, who had been comforting himself with the hopes that old friendship would at least save his life, saw all his visions vanish like smoke with the last dreadful words; yet he determined he would not lose his life for want of asking. During their converse the Captain had let his unfortunate prisoner loose from the iron grip with which he had till then detained him, and now stood calmly scrutinizing his suppliant.

"Oh, Captain de Vere, noble Captain de Vere, for the sake of old friendship, spare me, for the sake of the Earl, your departed sister, have pity on me, an aged, helpless man. Why should you take my life? I have done you no harm; leave me to finish my life in peace; spare me to my daughter. Oh! you have had your revenge in slaying my son, the hope of my age. Oh! stay your sword."

"Name not your son in the same breath with your abject supplications; he died a man, he had some pluck

in him, but sirrah! you are a disgrace to your name—a disgrace to Britain, and all your intreaties will not move me. I will hang you on the next tree and rid the world of such a poltroon."

"Then if you have no mercy in your black heart—if you have no natural pity in your reptile blood—hear me as an Englishman. I tell you a heavy retribution will fall on you if you shed my blood. I am a Briton, and His Majesty's liege subject. I am his special servant; dread him, bold robber, he will send his armies and root such accursed bloodthirsty wolves from this country."

"Ha, you speak very fine, my brave fellow, but I scorn your threats as much as your intreaties. I have long renounced my allegiance to your besotted king; here his armies and navies are alike useless: besides, my bravo, who will tell his most sacred Majesty that his servant hangs like a felon on a nut-tree? But egad, we waste time arguing with a cowardly old miscreant like this. Pedro, swing him up on yon tree."

"You dare not—oh heavens! you dare not—the Earl —the King—oh, no, no," embracing the very hessians of the bandit. "Captain de Vere, for auld lang syne, pardon me, I know not what I say, hang me not like a dog."

"As you are one, that were no great fault; but perhaps you wish a little torture first. Pedro, Antonio, twist the rope round his forehead first, till his eyes start a little."

"Good God! you surely joke, you would not, you could not do so," exclaimed the unfortunate man, as he saw these desperados approach to fulfil their master's order.

"I joke not," replied the Captain; "you think I am a woman, and turn pale at the sight of blood. I have not been pirate and bandit a dozen years for nothing, by

G—. I have not roamed torrid and temperate zone, or pitched shiploads of niggers into the sea to grow sick at a little bloodshed, or merciful because an old coward asks for mercy. I have seen a dozen better men than thee, old dotard, tortured and beheaded, and think you I joke; ye gods, you will find me another man than you think. Did you hear me, sirrahs? do my bidding, or Iddio! I'll serve you the same. And hark you, if he chatters for mercy any more, tear his vile tongue out by the roots."

These awful commands would doubtless have been carried out to the letter had not Adrian, or, as our readers must have already guessed, Edward L'Estrange, then stepped forward, and pleaded for an old friend.

"Nay, Luigi, hurt not the poor old imbecile, he is not worth your interest. Hands off, villains!" (to the two ruffians who were about to begin their work of butchery). "Heed them not, old man, I will not let them harm you, for the sake of old and better days."

"God bless you, Edward L'Estrange, you had ever a feeling heart! God bless you for befriending an old, and friendless man, who has fallen among thieves! God be merciful to you for saving a poor fellow creature's life!" exclaimed the poor man when his tormentors departed.

The Captain bit his lips. "You were ever a soft-hearted fool, and would be better occupied in wooing your lady-love, or in writing sonnets to another's bride, than aiding in any manly exploit; but, hark you, I will spare only his tortures—not his life. He fired at me, and by heaven he dies for it! I am captain here, no one shall countermand my orders."

"Edward L'Estrange, for the love of God, say something for me."

"I can do no more; he is captain. God knows if I

was, your blood should not stain my hand; be thankful I have saved you from torture."

Poor Lennox thought he had small cause for thankfulness.

"Are we to loiter here all day? By heavens, my comrades! heard you ever such a noise about an old fool's life before? Egad, one would think there were two captains here. Every command is reversed! Which will you have as a leader—Adrian or me? Which will will do most for you—he or I? Whom will you obey? By G—, it's time there was some understanding."

"You, you, you shall be our chief, *al diavolo* with Adrian, the faint-hearted fool!" exclaimed Pedro; all the rest assented.

"Then obey me only," said the Captain; "we shall have the sbirri here in half an hour more, unless we come to quarters. Here, hang, shoot, strangle, or behead yon rascally dotard—which will you have, Lennox? there's store of deaths, choose away and be sharp! You are dumb, are you? Then I'll choose for you. Antonio cut his head off, and stick it on a pole; he ever soared high, he shall be higher after death than before it. Toss that carrion into the ravine," pointing to the postilion, "and whip off that lad's head, too, and stick it on a pole opposite his father's; and now for the girl."

We turn our backs on the scene that followed, and shut our ears to the heart-rending cries for mercy. Enough to say in less time than we have taken to write this, the heads of the unhappy father and son were cut off, and whilst the bleeding trunks were left as they lay, the ghastly heads were stuck on two poles, and elevated on either side of the road.

Turning a deaf ear and merciless eye to the butchery, the Captain approached the carriage, on the floor of which the hapless Caroline lay in a dead faint.

"Ha! not ill-looking by any means. Come, my girl, cheer up," applying some brandy to her nose, whilst another robber flung some water on the senseless girl's face. These restoratives had the desired effect, and the poor girl opened her eyes; at the same time crying out, "My poor father, is he alive? Oh! spare him, noble sirs!"

"He is well—that is the old man—and will remain so if his daughter will be Luigi's bride," said the hard-hearted Captain.

"Oh, God be thanked—but my brother?"

"Heed not him, come away; here Pedro, Adrian, you were ever a lady's man, give this girl a swing on my horse, and take her down to the cave; she will do to drive away my hours of ennui."

L'Estrange stooped down and lifted her in his arms: taking her out of the carriage, he let her slowly fall down from his arms till her feet touched the ground; he turned her head away from the poles with their ghastly heads. His face betrayed convulsive emotions, as if he was planning something within.

"Why burden yourself with her, Capitano?" said Pedro, "there are fairer girls than she in Avellino; she will be a burden, and ever moping and crying, like your last Inglese girl."

"You speak sooth, d—n me if you don't. What do I want with the pigeon? Wring her neck, and let's be off with our booty."

"Luigi," said L'Estrange, for by that name he had long learned to address him, "you have had your way with the old man—you have dipped your hands already in innocent blood—leave this girl to me, let her be my prize."

As he spoke these words poor Caroline had detected the cruel reality, and, giving a wild scream as she glanced

towards the fatal poles and their dreadful burdens, again swooned and sunk down on the ground at her protector's feet.

"You chicken-hearted fool, you were ever a blockhead when women fell in your way, but this girl is my prize, and I'll do what I please with her. See, the silly dove has gone and swooned again. Egad, you make a nice pair. Come, Adrian, away with such folly; run your dagger through her heart, and let's away, or we shall bring the whole country buzzing about our ears."

"Protect me, sir; oh, protect me," cried Caroline, awakening again from her swoon, and as if by instinct seeing in him a deliverer.

"I will—fear not, maiden."

"Can you?" roared the Captain. "Are you able? Ye powers! he dares me, his captain!"

"You are not my captain, I renounce my allegiance. I have long been sickened by your brutalities. I wanted but an excuse to shake off an accursed yoke. I am free; henceforth I forsake your band. I will protect this girl. Thank God, black as my heart is—dark as my crimes have been—I have something human left still; let me see who will touch her!"

Whilst he spoke these words a dark light beamed on his face, his eyes seemed to flash fire; beneath him knelt the poor girl, who had flown to him for protection, around him scowled the brigands, struck dumb at this sudden rebellion.

The Captain's very aspect darkened, as with a stern voice he again asked, "Comrades, who is to be captain? —whose is the girl?"

"Thou art—she is yours," exclaimed twenty voices.

"Then renounce your booty, give up your prize, obey your chief! miscreant, fool, rebel, accursed and d——d, yield thee!" he shouted rather than spoke these words,

and, as he spoke, he advanced to where L'Estrange stood.

Never did fierce tiger guard its prey as L'Estrange did his suppliant; his whole frame trembled with passion, his mouth quivered, his eyes rolled fire.

"Back on your life; tempt me not," he cried, in a voice shuddering from wrath; "she is mine, I will guard her to death—I will save her, I will; fear not, maiden."

As the dove trembles when the hawk approaches—as the chicken hides beneath its mother's wing when the kite poises above—so trembled Caroline, so did she crouch beneath her protector, as the fierce Captain stepped forward.

The rest of the brigands stood still in a circle round, they were men, and they loved to see manly resistance; it would be hard to tell which of the two had most well-wishers. They saw L'Estrange was no coward, no faint heart, although merciful. They knew the Captain's character, and in silence watched. There was not one there who would give unwarrantable assistance to either, —the two must fight it out—they only looked on.

"Save *yourself*, Adrian, save yourself, L'Estrange; see yonder come the troops," pointing down the vale, up which came a large detachment of mounted sbirri; "yet," laying his hand on Caroline's shoulder, whilst she shrunk from his touch, "never shall it be said mortal man bearded me living. I am captain, I will have my lawful captive, and," lifting his bright dagger, "now yield thee, give her up. I will be chief—nothing but death shall make me yield my authority."

"Then die!" cried L'Estrange, striking a back-blow at his enemy with his stiletto. It sunk beneath the blade of the Captain's right shoulder.

"Oh, God! you have killed me, villain! oh, God! I am done for!" ejaculated the unhappy man, as he sunk

backwards. At the same instant a dozen gunshots rent the air, and the robbers were surrounded on every side by enemies.

"What have I done?" exclaimed L'Estrange, gazing at the ghastly face of the Captain. "I have killed him! God forgive me!"

Then, throwing Caroline across the saddle-bow of his horse which stood beside him, he himself mounted in an instant, and, casting a hurried glance at the new foe and his late comrades, struck his spurs into his courser's flanks, and dashed through the sbirri, managing his horse with his knees; holding Caroline with one hand, whilst with the other he whirled his sabre over his head, cutting his way right and left through the sbirri. A dozen pistol-balls followed his flight from both friends—at least former ones,—and enemies; but he seemed charmed,—no bullet struck him, and he was soon beyond range both of ball and vision.

The fight and its awful end had so engaged the bandits, they did not mark the new enemy approach, and gradually surround them: when, however, the first shot was fired, and one of their band fell mortally wounded, they were soon up and doing.

The two conflicts went on together for a few moments; then the Captain fell, and the sbirri, seeing the champion sink, rushed again on their foes with renewed energy.

The robbers were not men to be taken by surprise, as the sbirri found to their cost. They were all mounted in an instant; and the most of them, well acquainted with the ground, which their antagonists were not, disappeared in the woods, and from behind the trees kept up a telling fire. Man after man dropped before the unseen shots, and the few remaining soon began to lose spirit. When their Captain fell, and Adrian galloped off with his prize, a yell of vengeance arose from the

brigands; and one of joy from the sbirri. The former —at least half a dozen who still remained—rushed to protect him from the latter, who strove to gain possession of the prize. A terrible hand-to-hand conflict was fought over the wounded man, who laughed as he saw them so grimly engage; for though mortally, he was only wounded as yet, and might live many hours.

Several bullets were, as we have already said, fired after the retreating L'Estrange. The battle still went on over the Captain; the sbirri wavered,—they yielded, and then fled. But they did not escape; every man was shot or cut down, and not even one escaped alive to tell the tale! The successful belligerents then took up their wounded captain, as well as the plunder, and diving into the woods, sought their cave, leaving five dead, and carrying home four more wounded besides their chief Luigi.

About half an hour after the conflict had ceased, and the brigands were gone, a solitary figure emerged from the woods, crossed himself when he saw the numerous corpses, and the poles with their bleeding trophies, and whistled, faintly at first, as if afraid of the reappearance of the enemy, then louder. His whistle was answered by plaintive neighs, and in less than ten minutes two of the four horses trotted up to the postilion; by-and-by a third also appeared; after some time he succeeded in harnessing his horses to the despoiled carriage, and set off alone for Foggia.

He had not proceeded far, however, ere the temporary fastenings he had made gave way, and the carriage once more came to a stand-still. The postilion alighted, and then, giving the other horses their freedom, mounted one, on which he galloped to the Earl's villa, bearing with him a scarf dyed with blood which had belonged to Caroline, as a dread token of the truth of his tale.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood:
I've seen it rushing forth in blood.
* * *
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of sin delirious with its tread."

Prisoner of Chillon.

On his restless couch lay Captain John de Vere, the dying brigand. He was mortally wounded, though the deep gash had been bound, and the outward flow of blood stayed, yet he felt a pang which told him the wound bled internally, and he could not but feel it was for his life. Death is a grand tryer; and when the bold sinner felt that within him which, in unmistakeable language, silently told him that in a few hours at most he would quit a life of crime and bloodshed, and enter on an endless existence of misery, or total annihilation, (for he was a professed infidel,) even his stout heart somewhat quailed! He felt the firm ground—the *terra cognita*—giving way; the reed on which he held failing him. He was about to make that dread leap in the dark, and to appear before an offended Deity; for though he professed to disbelieve in the existence of God, his heart belied his voice. He was in a burning fever—faint from loss of blood and parched with the death-thirst!—he felt the slow trickle of his life-blood inly welling! Oh! how his tongue seemed scorching, as if a foretaste of the quenchless fires of hell! He turned over on his side, a thrill of agony shot through him,

and he again relapsed to his former position, and lay on his back. He had turned to see if there was any one with him; he was alone, save his own dark thoughts,—they were with him! The couch on which he lay was raised on a slight bedstead that stood against the naked rock-walls of the cave. The apartment itself was a small cavern, opening into the larger cave in which the band lived,—it was his own private cell!

It was dimly lighted by a single wax candle of large dimensions, whose light counterfeited gloom on the dark rocks, hung with weapons, which glimmered in the uncertain rays. A large oaken table, very low, stood in the centre of the cave; on it were placed several bunches of grapes and a glass vessel of water,—but beyond the sufferer's reach, tantalizing him with their proximity. Oh, if he could reach the cooling fruit, and still more cooling water!—it seemed to aggravate his pain; and once more he made an effort to rise. This time he sat upright, and experienced a certain relief from the change of position; he gazed on the tempting fruit; but when he further raised his form to strive and reach it, another agonizing pang shot through him; so intense was its poignancy he could scarcely forbear screaming. He sank back a second time, muttering curses on his band.

"They were ready enough to share my booty!—good friends in health, but at need where are they? False dogs! vile deceivers!—they leave me, their captain, to perish like a brute beast! Bill! Pedro!—some one of you—dogs, ingrates!—for the love of God a glass of water!" The last part of the sentence was shouted. "They hear me not—they care not for me!—but no, I wrong them," he said, as the curtain which divided his cave from the larger was pushed aside, and an Italian maiden entered. She was very young, and singularly interesting-

looking in face; her beauty, of a high order, was as yet imperfectly developed; her eyes large, dark, and piercing. She approached the dying man with noiseless tread; then in her soft tongue asked if he wanted anything.

"Yes, child, water—water!—for God's sake! I am parched."

The maiden poured out a silver goblet-ful from the glass vessel, and brought it to the sufferer; he seized it as if it had been for his life, and eagerly drained it.

"Thanks; it is long since I tasted water, signorina, but I never before drank wine with such gusto,—egad, it was nectar!"

"Take some grapes, Capitano," said the girl, offering him a bunch; "they will cool your tongue. Are you better?—easier from pain?"

"Ay, better now," exclaimed the Captain, receiving the fruit. "Now tell Bill Stacy I want him:—why does he shrink from the sight of death?"

"He shrinks not from death, but has gone to bring you a priest," said the girl. "The Virgin grant you may yet live!"

She then as noiselessly departed, and once more left the dying man to his own reflections.

His thoughts were far from enviable; he felt perhaps remorse—for it was not repentance nor grief—for his crimes; and as he recalled them all, the long dark catalogue seemed endless,—terrific! Deeds of rapine and murder long forgotten revived like adders, and stung him once more;—but it was the agony of lost despair—the echoes of horrid crimes!

From these thoughts he was roused by the entrance of Bill Stacy, and with him a Roman Catholic priest.

"Ha! Bill! you are come at last. Egad! I thought you had clean forgotten a wounded mate. But who the devil have you got there? Where did you pick up yon

shaveling?—and why bring you accursed priests to my bed?"

"Your cable is nigh run out; I thought you would like a chaplain mayhap, and brought this fellow along—for I had hard work to prevail on the cussed fool to venture his head here;—but here he is; and he knows a yarn o' long prayers!"

"My son," said the priest, looking heavenwards as he crossed himself, "look on this blessed sign, and ere life takes wing, ask the bless—"

But he was cut short by the Captain.

"Cease your drivelling—idiotical nonsense, or preach to others who believe your fables. Egad, you think me dying, but I'll come it yet. Away, old dotard!"

"Blaspheme not, my son; think upon the blessed Virgin; think on him who forgave the dying thief."

"I, the dying thief! be d—d to you. Bill, if you love me, chase the whining hypocrite from the cave. God's name! had I the strength, I would break his shaven pate for him."

"He don't want you, nor do I neither; so spread sail, old monk, and look sharp our lads don't tear your frock off your back or your hide off your old bones," said Bill, pushing the priest unceremoniously from him by the way he came in.

"What in the foul fiend's name brought you that pattering shaven-headed rascal here for?"

"I told you, but howsomdever let it pass. What did you want me for?"

"Sit down, Bill. I say, Bill, this cut isn't mortal, is it?"

"There's small doubt of that: you are overhauled at last. I bound it up, but the blood flows into your hold, when it is full you will sink."

"You lie, sirrah! and yet—yet, I do feel queery.

D—n Ned for a villain; it was a cowardly felon-thrust. You will avenge me, Bill, if I flit."

"I promise you. Our band will go to wreck now when their skipper is gone."

"And yet, Bill, I may come it. I've escaped worse than this."

"No you havn't; you won't ride out this squall. You are wrecked at last, and on the shoals now."

"Go to the devil. You are a capital Job's comforter, Bill," said the sinking sinner, trying to laugh.

"I'm thinking you will see him first. Gin there be a devil he should give you a good berth, since you have helped so many downwards. You'll know if there be a hell or not this night."

For some time, as if exhausted by his exertions in speaking, the Captain lay silent and motionless, save that now and then, as if in agony, he ground his teeth together or clenched the clothes between his fingers. Old Bill sat silently watching him without a feature moving. Again the dying Captain sat up, and passing his hand over his eyes as if to clear his vision, said, "Bill, the candle is going out—it is getting dark."

"It is your own candle going out, and the darkness of death in your brain!"

"You lie, dog, it is false! and yet—yet how dark it grows. The shadows pass quickly; ah! they're gone, I see clear again; and now once more they come—it grows dark, so dark! Bill, I'm dying—but get brandy, I've heard it has do—ne won—" He sank back, unable to articulate the final words.

Bill passed some of the burning spirit into his mouth from a flask; its effect was rapid and wonderful. Once more, fed by the ardent liquid which gave a short-lived strength, and, as it were, nourished the flickering lamp of life, the expiring man sat up.

"More, Bill, more! hurrah for brandy! More, I say. Ha! I begin to see clearly again. More yet, more! The shadows are gone; I feel new vigour. Ye gods, I'll come it yet!"

Bill shook his head,

"Give me the flask again," said the Captain, ere five minutes were flown; "the shades fall again; I will drive them to hell! ha! they go—they go to the devil who sent them; I shall live yet."

Again he drank the maddening liquid, which in a fearful way buoyed up the sinking man; but the alcohol and loss of blood combined worked on his brain and fired it into a kind of frenzy. He sprang up as if convulsed, and crouching amid the wolfskins that covered him, like a wild beast in his lair, struck at an imaginary foe which seemed to haunt him.

"Don't you see him, Bill? the fiend; have at him, drive him away."

"I see nought," replied the old man, still watching him with imperturbable countenance; "who is it you see?"

"Who?" yelled the wretched man. "D'you ask who? See him at the foot of my bed; 'tis the Devil himself."

"Come to overhaul his son," answered Bill, with a brutal laugh. "What like is he, Jack?"

"Bill, you are the archfiend's self, to mock me in my last distress. He is gone, thank God! No, no, there he comes again—will no one scare the demon hence? Ho! there are more—I see them—they crowd around me—they gibber—they laugh a hellish laugh! All my victims come to daunt me! There is Hesketh, Graham, ye gods! Musgrave too; he points to the red hole in his forehead. Avaunt, fiends, away! you frighten me not, I dare you one and all. There's Strogonoff—ha! more, by Jove—crowds—the hung, the tortured, the stran-

gled, the drowned—crowds of them, the infernal niggers! the air is full of their horrid faces! they will tear me. Save me, Bill. Oh, powers of darkness; *she* too, she is there."

"Who is there?" said Bill; "you seem to have a good company—a devil's dance, and women to dance too!"

"Yes, it is she; then I did murder her. God above! I dreamed I had failed, but no, she is there too."

"She, who is she?"

"Antonia, Juana, who you like. I may as well make a clean breast of it—I poisoned her. I feel remorse for her—for none of the rest. Ah! how pale she is! how dull her once glorious eye!"

"Fiends of hell! you didn't; but you have said it, dog, and for her you die." And with an expression of horrid ire, the old man sprang from his couch and gripped the dying man by his throat.

"Death, hell, and furies! would you murder me, villain? a dying man. Ho, help! he is throttling me, I cannot breathe—help—let go, dog!"

"No, I won't defraud death; you may die scatheless, murderer, villain, foul poisoner! if there is a hell you have dearly earned its torments."

"Leave me, hound, let me die in peace; but stay, give me brandy once more, the room gets dark again, scales of blackness seal my eyes. No, I will not drink; I am better again, I shall yet live."

He lay back calm on his pillow, his eye looked bright, he felt lighter, but it was only the dead man's lightening, when the blood flows back to the seat of life and relieves "the o'ertortured clay;" and what he dreamed was the return of life was only the first touch of death. It seemed the last mercy accorded to this miserable man that at least he should die with full possession of his senses.

"Bill," he said, "forgive me—forget that deed—I am going now—it was that fiery liquor distorted my senses. Bill, there is a hell, I feel its breath scorch me now!"

"Will you have the old priest to absolve you like?"

"No, no, I will die as I have lived; I will meet the devil like a man; I have served him all my life; I have sown the wind, why should I play him false now, or be amazed if I reap the whirlwind? I have been a great sinner, but God knows my blood is on your head, Bill; you brought me to this, and – Oh God!—I am gone! A mortal pang ran me through like a knife—the Devil has hold of my heart! oh, heavens! I die—I d—i—e."

The death rattle in his throat choked the last words, and the soulless form of what was once John de Vere sank back,—the immortal soul fled to its dread Maker.

"Ay, he is gone; wild and bad he was, yet he was a fine fellow. I have had my revenge. The last act remains only to be played out, but his murder must e'en be avenged," said old Bill, as he lifted the dead man's hand and let it fall nerveless again by his side. At that moment Pedro and a youth of eleven or twelve, though he looked much older, entered the chamber of death.

"How is Luigi? Where is our Captain?" asked Pedro.

"Luigi is where we shall all be one day, with the master he served!"

"Alas!" said Pedro, as he approached the bed on which all that was once his chief lay. "Alas! my brave Captain, my true friend, thou art laid low by a felon hand! Thou wert a true brigand,—a bold, fearless leader,—and what art thou now? inanimate clay—soulless dust! Farewell, Luigi, foreigner though thou wert,—the pride of the banditti, the terror of the Capitanata, the scourge of the Abruzzi! Thou art lost now; dull is the eagle eye—cold the impassioned cheek—nerveless

the strong arm—still the high heart. Woe to us now! Who shall lead our bands? who shall think, plan, fight, and divide the prey? Woe to the hand that spilt thy blood! We have lost our head to-day; I have lost my friend—my boonfellow! Alas! woe is me!"

Tears stood in the robber's eyes, to whom the late Captain had been a guiding star and friend—even in crime there is a sort of false glory—even among robbers a sort of friendship!

The boy Giovanni, too, leaned over the death-bed.

"Alas! thou art low, high heart, brave soul! But, like the rays of the setting sun, a twilight glory lingers yet. Thy life is gone; not so thy example. The fiery soul lingers still. I feel it swell within me! Our Captain is gone. I will be leader now. I am young; but it was his will. I am a boy in years—a man in soul. This sword," taking the late Captain's blade, "shall not lose its lustre. Call our men in; let them own their chieftain."

Pedro blew a blast. Silently and sadly the whole band assembled. They filled the room; there were at least seventy bold spirits besides Bill, Giovanni, and Pedro; there was only one of the other sex; she wept bitterly, as she pressed the cold hand of Luigi.

"Comrades," said Bill, "our gallant Captain is dead!" A groan of rage and sorrow arose from all. "He named Giovanni as his successor. He is a stripling—a youth in age; but he will make a worthy Captain. I will train him up. Will you acknowledge him? Let those who will hold up their swords."

An instant clash of steel took place; not a sword was lacking.

"Then swear allegiance by your swords; and let the spirit of the dead be witness!"

The oath was taken. A sullen silence reigned for an instant.

"Leonora," said old Bill, "come here."

The maiden came. He whispered something in her ear. She was about to depart when a noise was heard in the bed where the dead lay. Every eye turned towards the place. He had been now dead for half an hour at least, and a shudder thrilled every soul as they saw a faint movement take place on the lips of the dead. Then two long, harrowing shrieks of agony rose from the blue lips, and echoed with fearful tones through the cavern! There was not a faint heart there, nor a coward soul; yet when they heard that scream twice repeated from the lips of the corpse, not a heart but sunk, nor a cheek but paled! It was a cry as if a hundred demons seized on the departed, and he yelled as their fiendish grip encircled him!

Many of the bandits fled in dismay, and hurried in confusion from the inner cave to drown their terror in ardent spirits.

Old Bill alone approached the body, and pressed his hand on the death-cold brow. It was icy. He had been dead long ago!

"Perhaps," said Pedro, "the incarnate fiend has taken possession of the body. It were well to get priestly aid, and exorcise him to depart."

"Perhaps," said Bill, in Italian, "the devil has got into your own head. Tut! it was but the air a rushing from his body. I've heard the like before."

"They were the most awful sounds I ever heard. I shall never forget their terror," said Pedro, shaking his head.

"Thou art a superstitious dog, and frightened by a sound. What if the carcase itself arose? Could not we fight it as well as a living man?"

"Old man, you believe in nothing, fear nothing! You English are afraid of neither spirit nor demon. I

fear nothing mortal; but spirits from beyond the grave I do fear; and I care not to say so!"

"You had better drink another kind of spirit to drive such trash from your head," replied Bill, in English, as Pedro had used that tongue, thus giving force to the play on the word. "And, Pedro, see if Leonora be gone; and get a coffin to stow away our late Luigi in; and leave me here to lay out the corpse. I'se warrant not one of you cowardly dogs would lay claws on him now."

"Santa Maria! no! I am well pleased to be away."

Pedro, Giovanni, and the few remaining brigands then left the old man and the corpse together, and broached a cask of Falernian to drive away their terrors. In silver goblets they drank their late Captain's health; his quick delivery from purgatory; and vowed gold to purchase his redemption; as well as swore to avenge his death, if they got hold of the slayer; an important "if," for Adrian Vardarelli was esteemed a cunning man, who would not easily be taken.

CHAPTER XIV.

"His swarthy visage spake distress,
But this might be from weariness;
His garb with sanguine spots was dyed,
But these might be from his courser's side;
He drew the token from his vest * *
Me, not from mercy did they spare,
But this empurpled pledge to bear!"—*Giaour.*

THE sun was setting on the Apennines, bathing them in purple, as the postilion bearing the fatal news of the tragedy of Val di Bovino neared the outskirts of Foggia.

Close to the road leading to Naples, the last of a row of villas, was the residence of the Earl of Wentworth. It was a small one compared to his villa at Naples; but sufficiently large to excite the attention of the traveller. Built on a gentle eminence, surrounded by orange groves bearing their golden burden, its front aspect faced the Apennines, embracing a fine view of the rich country around, as well as the immense *tavoliere* of Apulia, the pasturage of numerous herds of cattle during the winter.

On the balcony looking down the high road sat the Countess, now more matured in age than when we last saw her. She was still extremely handsome, and, in the opinion of many, her ripened beauty exceeded her girlish charms. She was somewhat more inclined to *embonpoint* than of old, but had worn remarkably well, and still possessed the same luxuriant quantity of hair, more richly brown than ever; the same winning, soft blue eye; the same clear complexion. Her countenance

was saddened, but affliction had not soured; and when she smiled her smile was sweet as ever. Time had lightly laid his touch on her; she scarce looked five-and-twenty, though she was half a dozen years older at least.

A little distance from the Countess stood Lady Augusta, who was then past eleven. She was tall for her age, and built on a large scale; her eyes were her mother's, but her hair was very much fairer; her well-formed mouth betrayed the firmness of the De Veres. She was too young for us to judge of her character, or even what her appearance would yet be; but, if ever a mother's prayers and loving example are sure of a reward, doubtless Augusta would grow in beauty of mind and person all the Countess wished.

"Augusta, love, is there no sign yet of our guests? Look if you can see the carriage. They should have been here long ago."

"No, mamma dear, I see nothing. We shall hear the wheels first, for the orange-trees hide the turn in the road."

"No sign of Lennox yet?" said the Marquis, entering the verandah. "'Pon my word they are taking it easily."

"Indeed, I am beginning to feel nervous,—the roads are so unsafe. I wish they had started earlier," said the Countess.

"Pooh! you are always thinking of the brigands. I tell you Lennox wrote to say he would take guards."

"I know; but that Luigi is such a dreadful man! I quite dread going drives. And if he heard of my jewels coming,—he gets news of everything. I do hope nothing will happen."

"Never a fear. Young Lennox is a smart fellow. They will come all right. They are armed, and the sbirri with them. Luigi knows too well to risk an attack."

"I hear the clatter of a horse, mamma," said Augusta. "Ah! see, here he comes. How he rides; and he is stopping at our gate."

"Oh! I hope there is nothing wrong. Do go and see, Arranmore. How my heart beats!"

Lord Arranmore, without waiting to be asked, had left the balcony, and at the porch learned the dreadful tidings from the postilion, who, almost dead with terror, crossing himself and calling every saint to his aid, by broken sentences told all, producing also the ensanguined scarf.

The Marquis ordered the servants to give him refreshment (but the poor man had little peace till he had told them the whole twenty times over, and each time a little more exaggerated than the last), and then returned to break the news to the Countess.

"Your fears are, alas! too true," he said. "Our friends have been attacked and fearfully murdered!"

"Merciful heavens!" exclaimed the Countess; "is this true?"

"Too true. The wretched postilion, who alone survived, told me all. Poor young Lennox attacked them boldly, but was soon overpowered; then poor Lennox! Faith! the tale is too shocking for your ears. Enough to say, he was murdered, and the heads of father and son stuck on poles! The worst part is, all your jewels are gone too!"

"Oh! Arranmore! do not say so! I would gladly have lost every trinket in the world to save one life. But, Caroline, poor girl, what has become of her?" said the Countess, whilst unfeigned tears of sorrow coursed her cheeks.

"Ah! poor girl! she was carried off by the ruffian Adrian Vardarelli. Luigi is a bloodthirsty villain! but Adrian a— I won't say my fears!"

"Oh! my poor Caroline! my heart bleeds for her indeed! But had they not guards? How did it happen?"

"They met a count at their last stage—no real count, but a disguised brigand—who got everything out of our poor murdered friend. Alas! he little knew to whom he spoke. They hired two ruffians to guard them instead of the sbirri! though heaven knows they would not have helped them much! Then they were attacked —their false guards turned on them, and the postilion fled to hide in the woods, and from his hiding place saw the whole! I cannot repeat the horrors he saw, or the cold-blooded butchery! There was a quarrel between the Vardarelli, it seems, for poor Caroline, and Adrian mortally wounded Luigi. In the midst of the conflict some twenty sbirri appeared. Adrian galloped off with his prize. A fierce hand-to-hand fight took place, which ended in the total annihilation of the sbirri, and the victorious miscreants carried off their booty, and dead and wounded, as well as the dying Luigi. It is a comfort to think that vagabond has got his desert, and the whole country will be rid of a nuisance."

"This is a most fearful tragedy. Alas! what a lawless land this is, but perhaps the man may have exaggerated the truth, and they may be only captive, God grant it."

"I fear it is too true; this stained scarf tells its tale. Luigi never spared men; it was his plan to torture and then stick the heads of his victims on poles. Adrian only spares his captives for worse than death; poor Caroline, a sad fate is hers. However, this has now come to a pass, the whole country are up in arms, and they are determined to find out their hiding place, a secret that has baffled search as yet. I shall join, and so will Wentworth, and we will be avenged on the rascals," said the Marquis.

"Oh no, do not think of such a thing, dear Lord Arranmore. Wentworth shall never go; if anything happened to him it would kill me; for my sake leave their punishment to the troops. Wentworth shall go and see the King of Naples. Let us go and seek my husband, he must be told of this awful event. Poor Mr. Lennox and his son, and poor Caroline! I feel sick at heart for her. How I shall treasure this sad relic,—and all perhaps on my account! I would I had not asked them to bring my jewels."

The Marquis, accompanied by the Countess and their daughter, then descended to seek the Earl, who was busy with state papers in his study. The Marquis knocked, no answer came,—he opened the door, the Earl was not there; his desk lay open on the table, his quill was dipped in the ink, and a half written letter lay on the floor.

"Curious he isn't here, and yet I only left him half an hour ago; he must have gone out into the garden; see, the windows are open: shall we go and see, Countess?"

"Yes, let us go. Augusta love, put your hat on, and bring me a shawl, the dew is falling heavily."

In a few minutes they all three walked out through the Venetian windows, which opened on a smooth lawn bounded on all sides by orange trees, and explored the gardens to see if the Earl was there, as it was a favourite evening resort. After an hour, when it grew dark and chilly, they gave up the search, and returned. He was not in the house either; the servants were next questioned, but had not seen their lord. Lady Wentworth began to get anxious, and sent several servants to various friends' houses near, as well as the reading-rooms, and any other place where he might have gone to in Foggia. After a long, anxious time they returned, but without news.

"I am quite distressed," said the Countess, sinking on a sofa. "I am so anxious. Where can he be? this dreadful night has quite upset me. Where is my husband?" and she burst into tears.

"Dear Lady Wentworth, you have no cause for any anxiety; remember the Earl is continually away at night; he often goes to tea somewhere you must know; we have not sent to the right house."

"I know it is foolish of me, but I cannot help it, I am so shaken by this awful night; oh, if anything has happened to him, I shall die. Where is my Wentworth? Why did he not tell me where he was going to?"

Lord Arranmore did all he could to pacify the lady, but it was in vain he told her to fear nothing, as time sped on, and no sign of her lord still. Augusta had gone to her room, the Countess and he sat in the drawing-room, or rather she sat sobbing with grief, whilst he stood at the window straining his eyes to catch any glimpse of his brother-in-law. The moon had already risen round and full, showering down a light equal to many a day in the north. Every now and then he would say a word of comfort, begging her not to weep—"he would soon come;" but as time still went on, and not a sign of the absent one, he too began to feel a misgiving in his heart, and his mind readily conjured up real, or fancied terrors. The letter unfinished, the windows open; he had evidently gone for a walk but had not returned; could he have heard the fatal report, and with his natural impetuosity at once ridden off to the spot? as he thought of this a sigh unwittingly escaped him as he fancied the perilous position his friend was in. The quick ear of the Countess caught it, and suddenly springing up she ran to him; taking one of his strong hands between her own delicate fingers, she looked up into his face with a despairing earnestness

that went to his heart, and with tears standing in her large blue eyes, asked him why he sighed.

"Alas, Ellen," he fondly said, "I sighed to see you so unhappy at nothing."

"My dear Arranmore, tell me the truth; do you not now fear? hide nothing if you know it from me. Oh, deceive me not, you too are anxious."

Often when we wish to comfort people we say the worst things we can by a sort of heartless chance—contrariety. The Marquis, anxious to alleviate her fears by assigning a cause for her husband's absence, said the very worst thing he could.

"I think it is not at all unlikely, Ellen, that Wentworth has heard the news, and gone off with soldiers to the spot."

"Gracious Heavens!" cried the Countess, "I never thought of that; it is too true, that must be it, and he is now in those dreadful ruffians' power,—he is perhaps, wounded,—he may be—"

But her lips refused to frame the word, all she thought to say was lost in a wild scream, as she sunk on the floor in a dead swoon. The Marquis, terrified at what he had thoughtlessly done, rang the bell, while he lifted the insensible lady, and placed her on a sofa. The fit proved a long and dangerous one, and it was not till the doctor had been sent for that Lord Arranmore felt free from alarm. The medical gentleman said there was no cause for any apprehension, and in a short time she would recover. In the excitement occasioned by the Countess's illness the absence of the Earl was partially lost sight of, and whilst the Marquis was bending over the patient, he was somewhat surprised by the sudden reappearance of the Earl *in propriâ personâ*, who when his lady's illness was told him, rushed to the drawing-room, and forcing his way through the surround-

ing servants, in an agony of fear pressed his wife's hand, exclaiming:

"I knew it, see what my folly in not telling her has done. I think everything is leagued to rob me of my mind to night,—mysterious guides, horrid butcheries, robbers' dens, and now my wife dying."

The voice of her husband acted as a restorative when the doctor was beginning to think all would fail, and the Countess opened her eyes. When she saw the object of her solicitude she burst into tears, crying—

"God be thanked you are safe, my own Wentworth! where have you been? why did you leave me?"

"My darling, I could not help it, I was unwillingly lured away, but you shall hear all when you are better; we must get you to bed at once, the horrors of this evening have been too much for you."

The Countess grew rapidly better, and ere long was calmly sleeping away her terrors, whilst the Earl drew the Marquis aside and told him the cause of his absence. For more than two hours they were closely closeted together, and as they shook hands the Earl said:

"It has been truly the most wonderful day of my life."

"It indeed seems so,—it is the most extraordinary history I ever heard in my life,—it out-Herods all romances and novels. Faith, you were a bold fellow to risk your life amongst such ruffians."

"Had I not I should never have known all this; poor John, such an end,—and the other—"

"After all, you would have been happier in blissful ignorance, but you are sure it is not a tissue of lies?"

"Lies, oh, dear no, I have the proofs here," (producing a large packet of papers,) "besides, I saw enough to prove the truth of at least part; but we must not talk any longer to-night; to-morrow we will sift the whole to the bottom, and see what is to be done for our

unfortunate friends; their remains must be decently interred if we can obtain them. I would we could trace Caroline Lennox, and he who took her away. We shall have enough to do, first here and then in England, for thither I must go; we shall have work for the Crown lawyers."

"I' faith I hardly like to go home through that horrid valley; what if they cut us up too?"

"No fears, I have a pass for all Italy; no brigand would harm us were he to see this paper."

The Earl produced a small paper, on which were inscribed some hieroglyphical marks, on which the Marquis looked with some interest.

"This is a queer country after all," he said, "but we are got to talking again. Good night, I shall be glad to sleep off my thoughts."

"And I too," said the Earl; "but sleep will not chase mine away. Good night, I must see how Ellen is."

With these words they parted and sought their different rooms. The Earl found his wife calmly sleeping, and kissing her white forehead, prepared to follow her example. Whilst the whole house are bathed in forgetfulness we shall trespass on our readers' time a little longer, and account for the Earl's mysterious absence for so many hours. But as it is a long story we must leave it for the few next chapters, and we hope they will be sufficiently interesting to reward the reader's careful perusal of their strange contents.

CHAPTER XV.

"Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further."
Hamlet.

THE Earl had been engaged, as we have before stated, on some business connected with the Government that was then in power and the Neapolitan interests; so busily was he engaged in his occupation that his mind was thoroughly abstracted from everything else, and he neither saw nor heard anything that was going on around him. His study was immediately beneath the verandah on which the Countess and his daughter were then sitting. The balcony formed a sort of roof over a tessellated pavement that led to the lawn; up the pillars and trellised work that supported this verandah were twined vines and other creepers: these pillars, with their festoons, extended the whole length of the villa, and opened into a dark avenue of poplar trees. The windows of his room led to this walk, and being in Italian form, opened like a glass door, thus serving the part of window and door at once. They were open at the time we speak of, and the west wind blew lightly into the chamber, bearing on its wings the aromatic perfume of the orange groves. We have purposely been minute in this description, and why the reader will judge best by-and-by. The escritoire, where the Earl pursued his avocation, was placed about a couple of yards from the open window, and he sat with his back to the western hills glowing in the departing beams of the setting sun; perhaps he chose this position lest the

beauties of nature should call him from his duties, and tempt him to neglect his important studies. Several law books in English and Italian lay round him, and these he from time to time consulted, as he wrote. Once he thought a shadow, as of a person crossing between him and the sun, passed over the sheet he inscribed —it was perhaps the Countess, or Augusta, so he thought, and without even turning round he again wrote rapidly.

Had there been a third person in the room (for there were two there) he would have seen this intruder noiselessly enter by the inviting window; fearful of disturbing the writer, the figure crept on past him, till it stood exactly opposite, treading as if on velvet, so lightly fell each footstep. The intruder, an Italian maiden thirteen years of age—though the precocity of her climate gave her the appearance of a girl of sixteen at least—was dressed in the picturesque costume of the mountains. She had almost attained her full height, which was above the average, and revelled in all the freshness of a beauty, which, if it might prove short-lived, was radiant as the flower which fades first, owing to its surpassing bloom. The hot sun of her native hills had wooed, but not marred, the soft cheek; all its warmth seemed brightly received into it, as in a mirror! large lustrous eyes, gloriously black, fringed by long lashes, full lips of carmine hue, and a nose so slightly arched as to seem almost, but not altogether Grecian, completed this damsel's charms. Her dress was well calculated to set off without detracting from a face which needed no foil, and a form which required no art to enhance. Her long hair, dark as night, was braided in broad plaits which fell down her back through the folds of a scarlet silk kerchief, that confined her tresses and contrasted well with their raven hue, throwing a

warmth of colour over all. A tight boddice of black silk velvet, laced with gold braid, developed the bold outlines of her gently heaving breast. A dark-blue skirt descended nearly to her sandals—but not low enough to hide her well-shaped ankles; a narrow apron of various bright colours in thin stripes, fringed with gold lace at the hem, completed her costume. She wore a few ornaments all of costly workmanship, pendants of gold dropped from her tiny ears, a chain of pearls encircled her neck; from the end of this string hung a black cross set with diamonds of great value, and on her fingers sparkled several rings. Folding her arms across her bosom she watched the Earl, so occupied in his labours he knew not who watched him. The expression of the young girl's face was peculiar, and to have seen how earnestly and lovingly she fixed her gaze on the Earl, a stranger would have thought she knew him and loved him (and yet though she knew him she had never before been in his house), or would have imagined she was more to him than she seemed —in this surmise he would perhaps be nearer the mark.

Lord Wentworth was a true lover of nature, besides possessing a considerable amount of scientific knowledge. Botany was one of his favourite pursuits, and often he was accustomed to take long rides amongst the hills to pursue his attractive study. Whenever he had bent his course to the Val di Bovino he had been met by a young Italian girl, who, for some unaccountable reason, seemed to have the greatest affection for him. Whenever she heard the sound of his horse's feet, as if by instinct she was at his side, and with the sweet manners of southern countries used to proffer a bouquet of the most rare and beautiful wild flowers. He used to talk to her, and often she was his guide to secluded

grots, or dark dells where modest flowers sprung. There was something so innocent in this affection, so charming in the young creature who gave it, that she quite won his heart, and far oftener than he would otherwise have done he bent his horse's course to the Val, and experienced a sort of delight in the company of this child of the South. It was not love—it was a nameless, but pure affection—more of the affection of a father to his child. He had never once missed his little mountain maiden. Unable to devise wherefore she had so set her fancy on him, he nevertheless felt all the pleasurable sensations of the feelings he inspired. There was another reason why he felt a peculiar interest in her,—this was the wonderful resemblance she bore to one with whom he had once played so sad a part; she was the image of Juana Ferraras, as he had known her many years since. So struck was he with this similitude that he had used every endeavour to try and induce the little girl to come and visit him, in order that the Countess might see her—but all his endeavours had proved vain; and though he had prevailed on the Countess several times to accompany him to the Val in order to show her his little Leonora—such was the name he knew her by—yet either by a provoking mischance, or well-laid scheme, she was never to be seen excepting when he was quite alone; and the Countess used to twit him about her, declaring she must either be a fairy, or an Egeria of his brain. He had given her some rings, and other slight souvenirs, but she seemed above any pecuniary help—so he had never offered her money; he had vainly striven to find out who she was, and where she lived; after a period of three months' almost daily communication with his mysterious and romantic acquaintance, he had yet failed in every inquiry, and he began almost to fancy she was some

being unearthly, and perchance a lingering *dryad* of old, who still haunted her woodland dell! We have made this digression, as without it the meeting of the Earl and this maiden, for it was she who stood before him, would seem unaccountable at the least. A breath more deeply drawn than her usual respirations attracted at last the attention of the Earl to his visitor. He gazed up from his letter, and was not a little astonished when he saw his friend there.

"Leonora, my little Egeria—you here? And how did you come, and what brings you here?"

"My Lord, I have been here some time; you were so engrossed you did not see nor hear me enter. I hope I do not intrude."

"Oh! no—such an intrusion does not deserve the name: and what does my Egeria want? Is she come at last to see my lady, and little girl?"

"No, I am come on an important errand—I am a messenger with strange tidings."

"Of good I am sure, such a pretty herald could not bear ill tidings."

"Do not be too confident, my Lord; the bright sunset heralds in black night."

"Well, my love, you must tell me, and if I can do anything for you my help shall not be lacking."

"It is not here, my Lord, I can tell you; it is not me they concern, but yourself,—will you follow me?"

"Follow you—and whither? Really this is quite romantic and the hour well chosen! And what can concern me? Well, I will come if it is not far."

"It is far though; as far as the Val di Bovino."

"On my word, that is a long distance; and it is now getting late,—will not to-morrow do as well?"

"No, Signore,—to night; it is of the utmost importance; you know not what hangs on your coming."

"But, my love, the Val is not a 'canny place,' as we say in Scotland; it is full of robbers. Now, I fear not for myself, but my life is of value to my family; it would not be safe nor right for me to go."

"You need not fear, Signore; no one will touch you. I have a free pass from Luigi; see here it is (showing a card with some masonic words written on it); you need have no fear with me."

"That alters it certainly. But let me at least tell my wife I am going."

"My Lord, time is precious; lose no more; every minute is of priceless value. Waste no more time, Signore!"

Certainly, thought the Earl, this is a curious predicament, and still there is something so romantic in it; I cannot help going,—and yet I may be doing wrong. But Leonora would not betray me; I am sure of her, safe as steel! But she may be the artless messenger of Luigi, and my life may be in peril. I do not value it at a straw for myself; but Ellen,—no, I ought not to go.

"Leonora, I am not justified in going with you. To-morrow I will meet you at the Val."

A shade of sorrow passed over the young girl's face. "Alas! Signore; then you trust me not; you think I would lead you to peril. Farewell, Signore. I had thought differently of you; I am sadly mistaken. You have no confidence; farewell! You will never see your Leonora more, but you may repent your not following her!"

As she said these words, she mournfully turned away. It was not in mortal to resist any more.

"I wrong you, love, I do!" exclaimed the Earl. "Stay, I will come. I will follow you anywhere. There could not be treachery in such a brow!"

"Ah, you are like yourself again! The fearless, the

confiding," said the girl, taking his hand and pressing her lips to it; "you will see you have nought to fear, for every hair of your head is dear to me as my life. But, Signore, make haste; we have kept away too long; —this way; no one must see us;—beneath the verandah, down the poplar avenue, and then away, away!" and the girl clapped her hands with delight.

"But stay, child,—my horse; I must get that; I am not going to walk!"

"Nor need you; but I have got a horse for you all ready; follow me—*presto prestissimo!*"

The Earl had just time to fling a cloak over his shoulders, and snatch up a hunting cap, ere she was out of sight. He then followed her quickly,—under the portico, down the avenue, and then through a small postern, —and he was outside his gardens, and the Apennines in front. Still his fair guide moved on; she seemed to float rather than walk over the ground, towards a dark myrtle grove. By this time the sunlight had quite forsaken the west; the hills had re-assumed their dusky hue, and the full moon rising in the east began to shed a cold lustre on the dew-bathed landscape. Still in the full vigour of manhood, strong, bounding in health, and with a mind ready for adventure, the Earl saw something delightful in the mystery of his errand; the loveliness of his guide, the hour, the place, the uncertain light of the moon, the originality of the whole—all was charming! But yet here was he, a peer of England, a husband of a fond wife, a father of a loving child, racing at night after a stranger almost, a pretty Italian girl, to a well-known haunt of robbers, to hear some wonderful story, or see some wonderful thing. It was ludicrous as well as romantic. He almost began to laugh at himself as he thought what the Marquis would think of him, and to be angry with himself when he thought what

anxiety his freak would give Ellen. He had nearly forty miles to ride there and back, and supposing they did this in four hours' hard riding, allowing a couple of hours for delay and the time taken in revealing the secret, this would not bring him home till eleven at night, and during those six hours his wife would be wretched. But it was too late for regrets now; he was pledged to follow his guide. After all, he thought, I have often been later; she will but think I have gone to a friend's house, or the library.

Excusing himself thus, he followed Leonora still into the myrtle wood. She at last stopped, and, taking a little ivory whistle from her bosom, blew a signal. In less than two minutes a suspicious-looking man, leading two horses, appeared.* He was dark and swarthy in appearance, with long hair and beard untrimmed, as well as fierce moustache; wore a pointed hat gaily decked with ribbons, a jacket of crimson velvet embroidered with gold, breeches of dark blue velvet slashed with crimson, buskins of leather, and long spurs on his heels; his bronzed complexion and fierce look argued him a dangerous fellow, perhaps a bandit; but a silken sash round his middle, stuck full of pistols, knives, and stilettos, and a musket slung on his back, proclaimed it too certainly. When the Earl saw this fellow, he began to think he had been over-ready to follow a stranger; however, Leonora looked incapable of treachery, and he still trusted her. He made friends with the man by slipping a gold piece into his hand as he took the bridle of his horse. The bandit grinned as he saw it glitter on his palm, showing a white and regular set of teeth. The Earl then lifted his fair guide into her *selle*, which was covered with velvet richly embroidered with gold, gave the silken reins into her hand, and then prepared to mount his own steed. The horse

* The costumes of Leonora and this bandit are true to life.

he was to ride was a large and powerful Arab, coal black excepting a star of white on its forehead. The saddle and reins were of the finest leather, stamped with elegant designs. His guide's was a pretty jennet of the Andalusian breed, snow-white, with flowing mane and tail. She managed the skittish little animal with great address, and as the Earl followed slowly on his own noble charger, he thought he had never seen a prettier pair than guided him,—a more perfect horsewoman than his guide, a better bred animal than she rode on. The young girl gently walked her steed till beyond the confines of the wood, when she put out its powers more freely along a bye-path. It was not long ere they reached the main road, and then, waving her hand, she set off at a breathless speed and soon reached the grassy plains of the open country. The Earl, an experienced horseman, easily kept up with his guide, and he thought he had seldom pressed a nobler horse than the one that bore him.

When they reached the plain, leaving the road, she dashed forward across the sandy ground; the Earl followed. Their horses drove the numerous herds of cattle that fed on the immense pasturage right and left before them. Lord Wentworth was in high spirits then, and enjoyed the gallop over the great common as every rider must, especially by moonlight. Then there was the romance of the ride, following a beautiful girl to an unknown place, and as his courser's hoofs spurned the sandy soil, he almost shouted the "Tallyho!" of old England in his glee. It was not long ere they reached the hills, that advanced like great barriers; it seemed as if they were inaccessible and not to be pierced; but as they drew nearer the Earl saw the gap of a river through the mountains, and dense woods of acacia, arbor vitæ, and nut-trees became visible, as well as the road they had left.

Entering again on the resumed route, Leonora drew

the reins to breathe her panting horse; he followed her example, and side by side they began to walk their horses up the road, gradually becoming steeper as it crossed the chain of hills. The moon was now getting high in the heavens, and shone with silver rays on the brown mountains and woods above and below them. It was dead silence all, save the flow of the river beneath chafing against its rocky sides, or the shrill cry of the *cicalas*, the rustle of the dried leaves stirred by the passing wind, the tramp of the iron hoof, or the snort of the fiery animals they scarce compelled into a reluctant walk. Neither spoke a word; he was too busy with his own thoughts, the girl too modest to begin a conversation. Slowly they paced upwards; the woods grew denser on either side; the mountains rose darker; the roar of the waters grew louder; but in silence they still rode on.

They had now reached the middle of the pass, and arrived at the scene of the morning's tragedy, of which the Earl as yet knew nothing. The first thing that caught his eye, was the carriage, which stood in lonely desertion in the middle of the road; some fifty paces ahead a little beyond it his eye caught a glimpse of two poles, one on either side of the road, bearing aloft their dread tokens of guilt and murder. The moon shone on the haggard features, and rendered them disgusting and horrid. He shuddered as he saw them; on the road too he perceived numbers of bodies stretched in various groups. It was like a field of battle. As they approached, two or three dark animals rushed away into the woods,—they were wolves come down on their prey.

"What in God's name has occurred here?" said the Earl, as he now passed directly beneath the poles, and with difficulty guided his horse amongst the numerous corpses.

"Some poor travellers whom the Vardarelli robbed

and murdered to-day," answered the girl, with a *sang froid* that seemed totally unlike her.

"My God!" exclaimed the Earl, "it is even so; these are my unhappy guests! It is Mr. Lennox and his wretched son—I know those ghastly heads! Leonora, I can go no further; those death-pale faces will long haunt me!"

"What, Signore, are you come so far, and afraid to go on? True, this is a sad sight—the marks of plunder, rapine, and murder,—but with me you need not fear."

"You understand me not: these are my friends—they have been cruelly butchered."

"I am sorry they were Signore's friends; but by following me you may gain much—even by finding out about them."

"Wretched girl!" exclaimed Lord Wentworth; "is it possible you belong to this fierce gang?—so young, so innocent-looking! Ha!" he continued, looking on her with changed expression, "I see it now. I have been decoyed—duped!—fool that I was to come alone, and unarmed. I shall be set on, and murdered, and my head stuck by those! I will at least give them a chase for it," and he turned his horse's head.

"Hear me," cried the girl, "you wrong me, Signore—you wrong me! I have not deserved this! Follow me still—judge not by appearances, they may be against me: you will live to prove my truth; only have faith in one who would not for worlds injure you."

"By my soul, you take me for a fool! No, no, fair maiden, prevention is better than cure—you shan't get my head without a run for it."

"Once more, listen, my Lord. To return alone, even on that fleet horse, is certain death;—these woods are full of those who never missed their aim; and to go on with me is your only chance; and I vow by the great

God—by the blessed Virgin—not a hair of your head shall be injured! Do you believe me?—look at my face and see if truth is not written there. Oh! for your own—my sake—follow on. I am not what I appear!"

The Earl looked at her; the moon shone full on her face—it was the face of a Madonna—no shade of falsehood there.

"I will follow—I will trust you; only remember, Signorina, if you deceive me you break your word, your oath, your honour,—lead on."

The mysterious guide* then reining her horse to the left, descended through the woods towards the river. He followed. The descent was difficult, and very steep; the moonlight hardly pierced the trees above.

"This girl," he thought, "is either the strangest and most faithful I ever met, or the worst arch-deceiver I ever was duped by."

After a toilsome descent, in which their horses often stumbled, they approached the river with its limestone cliffs, and emerged on an open green. Here Leonora dismounted, and motioned to the Earl to do the same. She again blew the ivory whistle, a similarly-costumed bandit appeared, received the horses, and decamped as mysteriously as he came.

"Signore," said the girl, "you have promised to trust me; will you submit to be blindfolded, for you must no longer see the path you go?"

"Upon my soul, you are determined to give me cause to place my confidence in you: I suppose you will ask me next if I have any objection to be thrown in yonder river? However, have your way, I submit myself entirely to your honour."

Untying a gay scarf that bound her waist, she ban-

* See Note M. *The Mysterious Guide.*

daged the Earl's eyes; then taking his hand led him forward.

The path down which she led him was rough, stony, and seemed extremely steep. By-and-by he was aware he was crossing a bridge, and heard the river swirl and roar beneath him; it seemed far below, as near as he could judge by his ear. His route then lay upward, and ere long he was aware he had bade adieu to the moonlight and open air. An involuntary shudder ran through him as he perceived he must now be in a cave, from the hollow sound, and the echoes of his clanking strides. His guide felt the thrill, at least he fancied she must have perceived it, from her almost immediately afterwards bidding him not to fear. For more than a hundred yards, as he judged, she led him on through this vault; then he began to distinguish sounds, which soon resolved themselves into voices and laughter: they grew more and more distinct, till he could almost catch the individual words; then a sudden turn in the passage seemed to lead him away from them, and they grew more and more distant, till he lost the power of catching them any more.

He heard a footstep next, approaching, nearer and nearer, till it seemed beside him. His guide stopped, and spoke to the man in a language he did not understand. A gruff voice answered her. Another shudder ran through him as he thought he must now be in a den of robbers, and his life depended on the frail thread of a woman's word. Still he did not fear for himself; and he was determined that if, after all, he had been duped, he would try and sell his life dearly.

The thought of Ellen, too, oppressed him, and he bitterly cursed his folly in trusting himself to such chances. Another turn in the passage, and suddenly, a red glare told him he was again in light. There was something

at least reinspiriting in being in light ;—the thought of an assassin's dagger in the dark is horrible!

Almost immediately after, he felt his guide's fingers untying the scarf that bound his eyes. She slowly unknotted it, and then, as she left her hold, it dropped on the ground.

The lights dazzled his eyes, long accustomed to the dark, so much, that for an instant he could see nothing. When he recovered his sight, the first thing he looked for was his guide. She was gone!—the scarf lay at his feet, but she was gone! Had she been only a wraith to lead him so far, and then forsake him?

> "Hath she sunk in the earth, or melted in air?
> He saw not—he knew not—but nothing was there!"

CHAPTER XVI.

"He that dies pays all debts."—*The Tempest.*

"However deeply stained by sin,
He is thy brother yet."

When the Earl found himself thus mysteriously deserted, his next desire was to find out by what secret passage his guide had departed. He turned round, and saw a narrow passage cut out of the naked rock, which seemed the only outlet from the cavern he was left in; a black curtain, made of skins of animals, hung from the ceiling across this doorway. Having discovered the road by which his guide had conveyed herself away, he then thought of following her; but on second thoughts resolved to await the issue, as he might otherwise come on some very unpleasant sort of fellows. So he began to look about him.

The scene in which his eyes were again opened was sufficiently strange, and kept up the romantic incidents of the evening. He was the sole inmate of a cavern, formed by nature, but enlarged by art; it might be eighteen feet in length by ten in breadth; the roof, which was cut into an arched shape, was not more than eight, or at the most eight and a half feet above the ground; the walls were roughly squared out of the limestone rock, and were hung, like the sides of an armoury, with all kinds of offensive and defensive weapons,—muskets, sabres, rapiers, pikes, spears, pistols, cutlasses, knives, and stilettos of all sizes and shapes! A ledge of rock ran half way round the cavern, about two feet from the ground, which was strewed with rushes; this served

as a bench, and was not an uncomfortable one, if we might judge from the numerous wolf skins that covered it. At the extreme end of the room, if we may so call it, was a low bed,—the same on which Luigi had, a few hours since, yielded his soul to Him who gave it.

There was another object, however, which chiefly attracted the Earl's attention; on a low table which stood about the centre of the chamber, or dungeon, or cavern, whichever the reader pleases to dignify it by, stood a most solemn piece of furniture in the shape of a coffin; its ornaments, if it had any, were hidden by a pall of black velvet, with a fringe of silver lacework, showing great taste in design, which, streaming downwards till it swept the ground, completely shut out any view of the coffin itself, or its occupant, if it had one. At the head, the foot, and the two shoulders were placed four handsome silver candelabra with wax tapers lighted, to a fanciful eye denoting the figure of a cross; this design was further borne out by two swords, which were placed crosswise, but St. Andrew's cross, and not the Cross was shadowed by them.

There is always something solemn, even to a healthy and strong person, in the narrow bed in which at last all must lie down! it seems to remind the living they too must die; it is an object on which few can gaze without feeling a sense of dread! In our hero's situation there was much to increase these sensations, which he would have doubtless had at any time, but which at the present moment came with unusual force on his mind. He stood alone, amid a den of thieves and murderers, to which he had been wiled by a mysterious guide. Why was he there? For what reason had he been brought hither? He looked on that grim reminder of mortality with awe! He thought of the tyrant of Rome,—how Domitian had introduced his guests to a dark room, where they saw their coffins, and where black men armed

rushed in to terrify them! Had he been thus brought,—was that narrow box to be his last resting-place? He felt a sickening feeling of horror creep over him. He was a brave man, and had it been in open day would have made a stand against any number; but to be immured in such a place,—so secret no mortal else could penetrate to him, or assist him; to be brutally butchered, perhaps cruelly tortured first; to die alone; his fate to be hid for ever; his body to moulder in these vaults; all was awful!—no wonder he felt terror! He thought too of his home, of his fond wife, his only child, and all his friends,—they would never know how or where he had died! Even now perhaps Ellen was seeking him with tears! alas! she would never find his lurking-place,—she would have no thread to pierce the labyrinth! Oh! the hours,—perhaps years of despairing hope,—years would give no clue! How he cursed the hour he listened to that tale! How he despised himself for his credulity! a kind of giddy feeling came over his brain; a dizzy haze rose before his eyes. The coffin and its black pall, and dim lights were there, but they grew dim, and still dimmer! Was it a dream after all? He pressed his hand over his eyes; he withdrew it again;—no, it was real, horribly true! Again that sickening, sinking feeling crushed him! He looked for a seat; there was the wolf skin covered ledge: he walked towards it, and then sank away. He soon felt better; the giddiness passed away, and he began once more to soliloquise.

"Yes," he said, almost aloud, "there is no doubt of it: Luigi has lured me hither by means of my interest in this pretty Italian,—for what I dare not think! I have been properly cozened,—nicely hoodwinked! On my soul, I seem to deserve my fate as a punishment for my folly! What have I done?—left a fond wife, an only child, friends, home, everything,—all to follow a handsome girl,

across a country where robbers are as plentiful as hazel nuts! A wild, hair-brained fool I have been, and am likely to pay the piper for it too! A pretty mess to get into!—left alone in a den of murderers, in the power of the fierce Luigi,—a man without even the mercy of wild wolves, for they kill at once, whilst he leaves me in sickening suspense. I would I knew the worst at once,—anything is better than uncertainty. But then Leonora! could she be so false,—surely all her love for me was not a cheat? I can scarcely think so. Who is she? Perhaps Luigi's daughter. Ha! I have it now: and she is perhaps laughing at my credulity! What is her word to a heretic? She can get absolved from her vow by the next priest! It is a comfortable creed the Roman Catholic: a nice one for robbers, murderers, and cheats. I wonder all wicked men are not Catholics! But why am I here? They will get little from me,—my watch and half a dozen pieces of gold; surely for this I have not been brought here? If they wanted my blood they could have had it a dozen times; the man I met when blindfolded,—a stab in the back would have done the business,—a push off the bridge by my fair guide! After all, matters are not so bad; there may be something behind all this seeming mystery. Leonora may be my friend; I surely wrong her; vice could never assume such a winning guise; falsehood never lurked beneath an open brow like hers! I will 'bide my sugh,' as we say over the Tweed; I may live to laugh over all this yet,—although that coffin is no laughing matter, God knows! I would I had anything else in the room,—it scares one out of his usual coolness! I hope there is not a corpse inside! Old Andrew would say, 'it's no canny.' I declare I will go and have a peep under the cloth,—perhaps there is a friend in it, after all, and I am left to read the riddle; he will think me a slow guesser."

The change of thoughts had so altered his feelings he leaped up quite like himself again, and was about to put his plan into execution, when he heard loud voices and oaths, in Italian, English, and other tongues, alarmingly near.

"Ho!" he said, almost aloud, "after all, first thoughts are true, and Luigi's ruffians come to give me cause to know them; but, by heaven! we will have a fight,—they shall not kill me like a fox run to earth! there are stores of weapons here; I'll sell my life dearly; some of them shall know 'it is ill fashing wi' a desperate man,' as my northern friends say; they'll find what it is to beard a lion at bay!"

Whilst he was uttering all this between his clenched teeth, he caught a sword off the wall, and two pistols; the latter he cocked,—they were ready loaded; he looked at the flints—for percussion had not got to Italy yet—they were dry, so was the priming; holding one in each hand, he placed the sword across the coffin in easy reach, and stood prepared for any odds. His bold spirits rose with the danger; the blood mounted to his cheeks; his eye brightened; he felt his heart beat full,—not with fear, but eager excitement,—the high resolve to die like a hero! It was a perfect picture! With one foot advanced, he stood ready, a pistol in either hand, with their tubes pointed to the ground, the sword within reach, unsheathed. He waited in this attitude nearly two minutes,—the voices had ceased, all was silent.

"He seems determined to try my patience," he thought; "he will have the warmer reception; for, now I think of it, I will have a knife for close work; they at least give one weapons enough for defence."

He stretched to secure a stiletto off the wall, still keeping his gaze on the doorway; he reached one down, and placed it on the pall beside the sword; but in taking

it from the nail on which it hung, he accidentally pulled down a couple of cutlasses immediately above; they fell with a loud clanging on the rocky flooring. At the same moment he heard a footstep approaching,—the heavy tramp rang through the arched passage.

"Now for it," he said; "shall I shoot the villain directly he enters, or hear what the scoundrel has to say? The last is best; it is but a single fellow, and, at the worst, I will show him two can play at this game."

The step came nearer, and sounded louder and louder. The Earl waited in breathless expectation; the curtain moved,—it was pushed aside, and a figure entered. A look of surprise passed over the Earl's face: he had expected to see a fine, showily-dressed brigand,—probably Luigi Vardarelli himself; instead of that, he saw in the figure before him an old weatherbeaten tar, not in the picturesque garb of the banditti, but in a fisherman's costume. The man had a hangdog look; his features were coarse and repulsive; a ghastly scar seamed his brow; his lank hair was grizzled and matted; his beard and whiskers tangled more grizzly still, and besprinkled with snuff; he wore a rough pilot jacket, and heavy fisherman's boots, which reached up to his hips; his figure short, but broad as a bear; his expression at once gloomy and fierce. His grotesque dress, in such a den, —a man so wholly unexpected, so out of place—was so ridiculous, that the Earl could resist no longer, and throwing his pistols down right and left, regardless of the danger of their exploding, he burst into a merry fit of laughter.

The old man,—none other than Bill Stacy, as the reader must have guessed,—regarded this outburst of jocularity with savage scorn; and when the Earl seemed to have regained his composure,

"The deevil take your daffin and laughin'!" said old

Bill, who had not forgotten all his Scotch, "is this a place for your whiggery, think you, and the dead sae near? And what, in the fiend's name, have you loaded yourself with slashers, barkers, and whingers?—what the deevil have you to fear,—can't you trust old Bill?"

"Upon my word, my good man, I was expecting such a totally different guest, your appearance quite upset me! To your questions,—my being here is the best answer to them, and proves I fear you not. Trust you I did not; and being unarmed, and not knowing but that a dozen ruffians would be on me, I armed myself. It seems I had no need, and what I thought would be a tragedy, turns out a comedy. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Stow your ill-timed jesting, or I'll soon teach you, my Lord, where ye be, and all your arms will avail ye but little!"

The brutal manners of this old man proved to the Earl he was not yet out of danger, and he said, "I believe, old man, you are William Stacy. I have heard of you before. I have come many miles, and am in a hurry to be off again, so speed me my errand and let me be gone. I assure you this cave is not the lodging I desire for the night."

"Hark ye," cried Bill, with a terrific oath, "how do you know you will ever leave it? what if it were your lodging for aye? we are alone, what would hinder me from knocking you on the head?"

"If my death is your object, you had better go and call your fellow murderers. I fear you not, old man; I can hold my own against you—come on—I dare you—one at a time—fair play!" said the Earl, reaching the sword with his hand, and taking it off the coffin.

Old Bill looked at him with surprise not unmingled with pleasure.

"Put it down, you need not fear, I was but jesting.

Had I wanted your blood, young man, what had hindered me frae taking it this three times?—sit ye down, I have that to tell you will make you open your glimmers."

"I fear not," said the Earl; "delay me however no longer; my wife will be anxious for my return."

"She maun e'en wait," said Bill.

He sat down, relieved at least from his worst apprehensions.

"And now," said the old man, still standing, "d'you ken where ye have got to?"

"Indeed," said the Earl, "I thought it was to Luigi's cave, but your appearance forbids me to think so now."

"Luigi," said Bill, "ay, ay,—his den, and so it is—but sma' harm could he do now, though folk knew what he could do this forenoon!"

"Then you are implicated in the dreadful murder of my friends. I passed the place and saw the horrid relics; there were many bodies there; the fight must have been a sharp one."

"A hard one it was," said the old man, "albeit I didna see it—your friend was betrayed, your own gear plundered! The *collieshangie** was a fearful one our men say. The younger of the gentlemen made a stand—he was soon done for, and then the Vardarelli, d—n 'em, fought for the lassie. Adrian gave Luigi a stab with his knife that did the business for him, and rode away with the wench, devil knows where. Luigi, that's the captain, sughed awa', and he lies in yon box," pointing to the coffin.

"Wretched man! is he gone to his account? He was a true ruffian, and this Adrian has escaped! but whose were all the other bodies?"

"Aweel, I'll tell you—whilst these two fought like game cocks, a fleet of those cussed sbirri hove in sight,

* Scuffle, or shindy.

and would have overhauled 'em, but the Skipper gave 'em warning—they fought like born fiends, deil a ane of the sbirri cleared away, but the Skipper died!"

"A good riddance I think; but how does this concern me, save that I hear my friends were cruelly murdered, my property plundered, and the miscreant who did it is dead?"

"Lift up yon cloth, and take a look at the dead man," said Bill, with a cruel smile.

The Earl rose: he approached the table, and first lifting the swords off, then pushed aside the pall, disclosing a very handsome coffin elaborately ornamented in inlaid silver, being itself formed of polished black wood, probably ebony. Folding the pall he placed it aside, and then proceeded to raise the lid, which was as yet unscrewed. A man in full brigand dress, or rather what was once a man, lay there—cold, motionless! A white handkerchief was spread over the features. The Earl paused—Luigi was certainly a fine specimen he thought; upwards of six feet in length, and proportionally broad, his tall figure was peculiarly well set off by the dress he wore—the black jacket, with trimmings of silver, the scarlet sash in which still were confined his pistols, and stilettos, black velvet breeches, and black leather buskins: his arms were folded across his breast, and so lifelike did the dead man seem, that the Earl paused a moment, half suspecting that the figure would leap up, and end the play by confronting him, and daring him to single combat. Bill Stacy seeing him pause said—

"Lift the napery, and see if ye ken the face."

The Earl did so. Angel of death! who lay there but John de Vere, his brother? no marvel he started back,—no wonder he turned pale. Life like, but dead, he lay before him. He was little altered since his brother had last seen him. Crime and bloodshed had given a more

relentless aspect to his face, hotter suns had burned his complexion still darker, but the eye so fiery scarce closed, and the stillness of death had given an air of rigidity to his wild features. A frown had stiffened on his brow, and the last agony of death had impressed a vengeful scowl on his lips—the invariable effect of sword, or dagger wounds. Yes, that eye was for ever sealed.

> "Still, like a clouded gem, from its dull shroud
> Of lifelessness, its look was high and proud;
> And, though his brow deep melancholy confest,
> Oh! yet it lacked the air of perfect rest,
> As though it wist not where that rest to seek,
> And felt an anguish that it could not speak."

The Earl again approached, and gazed steadfastly on the face of the dead: he then turned away, as if he could endure the sight no more, and in an altered voice asked Bill—

"How came he here? how died he? speak, mysterious man!"

"I told you Adrian—that is Ned L'Estrange—and he fought for the lassie; Ned stuck his knife in him; that's how he came here."

"That was Luigi, but L'Estrange you said—my brain is addled, what is all this?"

"'Tis plain enough," said Bill; "the Captain was Luigi, and Ned L'Estrange was Adrian, and Ned, d—n him, killed the Captain."

"And this king of robbers, this Luigi, was my brother! Good God! I had heard he was not what people thought, little I dreamed who he was! and L'Estrange, Adrian! That man seems born my evil angel: he ran away with my betrothed, escaped from justice, and has now killed my brother! where is he, old man? he dies for my brother."

"Didna I tell ye he gave leg bail, and has given a

wide berth to old Bill; he kens better than run foul of him. Cuss him for killing the Cap."

"Luigi my brother! strange, strange," said the Earl, again approaching the corpse. "Alas, John! to what have you fallen?—a brigand, and now perished by the sword you too well used. Alas! alas! Still with all thy vices, thou art my brother yet. Death pays all debts but one, the debt of vengeance, and surely and bloodily thou shalt be avenged! and now," he continued, addressing Bill again, "tell me the mystery of her who brought me here."

"All in good time, my Lord. I have much to tell you yet; old Bill can spin a long yarn."

"I doubt it not, but delay me no more now; let me return home, I will come again and hear all to-morrow—I give you my promise—but not now; I must see about my murdered friends, arrange about the interment of my poor assassinated brother, set the bloodhounds after the miscreant who murdered him, and——"

"Stay, not so fast, you can't steer from here before you know all; when you hear who Ned L'Estrange is you won't be so keen to follow him. You must stay, I command you; sit down, sit down: if I whistled the room were full of those who would make you anchor long enough; the time is come, I have been revenged, the murder must out."

"I see I must stay then. In truth I know not how I could thread my way out—you will tell me then who that girl is."

"Ay, ay, I see you have a misgiving about the little craft; they say in the auld country, 'tis a wise bairn who kens his father, and I say it is a wise father who kens his ain bairn, and ye may een make what you will from that. But it will be a long yarn, and you had as well get something aboard your stomach."

"I can eat nothing," said the Earl; "I pray you begin at once."

"Ha, ha, you had better rouse up first, and weet your whistle, ye'll need it," and so saying the old man called: a bandit in full costume entered with wine and a couple of goblets. When he had retired the old man poured a goblet full, and handed it to the Earl, who felt the need of it too strongly to refuse so good an offer, and drained it off, declaring the wine excellent. Bill, without the formality of pouring it into the tazzia, put the bottle to his mouth—it was one of pig's skin—and took a long draught; then dragging a cask from beneath the table he sat down on it; and fixing his eyes on the Earl, who had reseated himself on the skin-covered ledge, commenced his narrative. We must however refer the reader to another chapter, and will also give it in good English, instead of the mixture of Scotch, sea phrases, oaths, and various scraps from many countries, in which it was spun, reserving only a few sea terms, or expressive words.

CHAPTER XVII.

Alonzo. "I long
To hear the story of your life, which must
Take the ear strangely."—*Tempest.*

"And this, my comrade, is that very one
Who was an infant then."—*Sophocles*, translated.

"To begin, then, at the commencement I must sail back many years. I am an old man now, and have had a rough cruise through life. I was then a young lad just ready to be launched out on the sea of life; it is forty years gone by now, but I remember all as if it had happened yesterday. The Earl of Wentworth, your father, was then but just of age, and had been celebrating his majority with great merry-making. On his estates the chief retainer was a man named Hermiston, the bailiff of the Dun Edin farm; he was a stout, well-to-do sort of man, and had one only son and two daughters: that son was me—my name was William Hermiston. My mother had died in giving me birth, and my father and sisters spoiled me,—never contradicting me in anything, and letting me grow up as wild a young scapegrace as was in all the country round. I got into bad company when I was about eighteen; idleness is the mother of all mischief, and so it was with me. I drank, betted, swore, and as I had plenty of the rhino, and was hail fellow well met with every companion that knew me, I grew worse and worse. My old father used often to say a word: he would shake his head and tell me he feared I would come to no good with such companions, but I heeded not what the old man said, and went on the

same. In the publics I became acquainted with some horse-racing fellows, and was soon at home in the betting way, and could make a book with any man. I ran into debt—or as we say at sea, outstripped the constable—they were debts of honour, and had to be paid. My father steadily refused to refund me any more; I applied to your father, he helped me out easily, but warned me not to expect any future aid. Again I got head over ears—money must be got, and I became acquainted with a set of wild fellows—smugglers. I had always been fond of the sea, and took to the trade readily. Full of risk and danger, it was exactly what I liked; I rapidly made headway, paid my score, and rose to be one of the leading men.

"By the time I was five-and-twenty, or thereabout, I was captain of a lugger craft, and well known as a desperate fellow. When my old father heard of my evil doings he sternly reprimanded me for the first time in my life. I was not able to brook censure, and told him so; he tried entreaty, all was vain. I left him and brought down his gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. My voyages were never very far, Holland was the extent of them at that time, and I had a magnet at home which kept me ever coming back; this was a young and pretty girl, who lived near Musselburgh; her name was Agnes Macgregor, and a finer lass I never saw. I had known her for years, and she had long been my sweetheart; she had no father or mother, and her grandmother was an old, decrepit, blind woman of seventy, so the girl was under little restraint. Many's the time I have walked and talked with her for hours in the evenings when I was ashore; she did not care a straw about the illicit course of life I led, nay, I think she thought all the better of me for it. I left her, as I was to go to Flushing first before our marriage, and promised to bring home lace enough to deck her out like a queen. I remember

well how she waved her kerchief to me as our craft put off at moonlight. I thought on her all the way over the rough German Ocean—it was winter time, and a bitter nor'-easter blew in our teeth, with driving sleet and hail. I reached Holland; I got the very finest lace for Agnes. I left again with a rich cargo, and landed in the old country. I had been absent some three months, winter had changed and spring set in; more than winter had changed, too—I found woman as variable as the seasons. I went to seek her at the old house—it was empty. I inquired—they had removed to a cottage near the Towers. I followed, I found her out—the hussy would have nought to say to me. In vain I argued, in vain I tried to get back her heart, it was all no go. I tried to find a reason for the change; she only gave one I would not receive—my manner of life, my being a smuggler. I loved that girl as I loved my own life; I offered to give up all, and seek an honest livelihood; all to no purpose, the wench had no more to say to me, and I was miserable.

"My Lord, you may look at my old weather-beaten features, and wonder any woman would look at me, but I was a well-favoured youngster then. I could put the stone, toss the caber, leap, run, and vault against any young fellow in the county. I was not the sour-faced, hard-featured seaman I am now, and I knew the girl once did love me, and dearly, and I resolved to wait and see what the cause of quarrel really was. But I had to put again to sea. I was away from home nearly a year and a half, but when I came home my ears were assailed right and left with the very thing I had feared—the girl I had promised myself for a wife had been deceived by one in the upper ranks of life; she had fallen, unable to resist the temptation of following one rich, handsome, and with a proud name—he was to be preferred as a lover, before William Hermiston as a husband. He gave her

money, handsome dresses, jewels, everything but an honest name and fame, but she could well afford to want them if she had all the conceits a girl's head runs on. In a word she was the dupe of a nobleman. I sought the cottage where I had seen her last: the old woman was there, not the granddaughter; from her I learned who her beguiler had been, and where she then lived. My Lord, it was your father, the young Earl of Wentworth; and he had given her well-furnished apartments near Edinburgh. The Earl had been married more than three years, and he had two children, a little girl and a boy about two years: he visited Agnes on the sly, and only occasionally.

"When I learned all this I almost died with passion. I felt a very devil of vengeance enter into my heart. The pride of my soul, the light of my eyes, my love, my destined wife, had been tempted, betrayed, and was now living in guilty splendour. My Lord, see the misery that light loves in high rank bring on the lower class. Your father was rich, powerful, noble by birth and name, possessed of lands, wife, children,—and his evil conduct robbed the poor man of all; surely this was a case of the rich man who took the poor man's lamb—the tale I used to hear of sometimes when I was a boy. And mark the consequences —ah! you great people little think the pretty and innocent girl you pick up, and deck out in finery, is perhaps the only love of some honest, poor man, whose whole life is altered by their crime. Such was the case with me. Owing to your father's choice, I was made a very demon, and the cause of misery untold, not only to the hapless girl herself, but to your own family. Oh! I loved that girl as I once loved heaven. I lost my heaven in her, and lose Heaven by her."

The old man here paused to rub away the unbidden tear with his rough sleeve. The Earl, deeply interested,

and feeling a home thrust in the narrative of his father's folly, bent forward, but spoke not.

"When I found out the true reason of her change, I hurried to see her. Your father had rented a cottage a short way from Edinburgh for her home; I went there, —it was a Saturday night, I remember; I watched and saw the Earl's carriage drive from the door. I did no more that night,—her guilt was now sure, and her deceiver too. On Sunday morning, when her servant was at church, I called: she opened the door, and when she saw me would have shut it in my face, but I pressed in. Her room was elegantly furnished; she was splendidly dressed; her dress enhanced her beauty; she never looked more lovely; and when I thought she might have been mine a demon rose in my breast. I know not what I said, save that I called her every vile name I could think of, and she bandied high words too, and bade me begone and leave her to mind herself and her baby. I had not dreamed of that. I turned and saw a cradle, and therein her firstborn child; it was a fair boy, but the devil was in me. The house was lone, every one at church, no human being near. I rushed to the cradle, and seizing the hapless babe, I dashed its infant brains out against the grate."

He paused: the Earl's face grew pale as he exclaimed, "Inhuman monster! you avow such a deed!"

"Ay, my Lord, reproach me, I deserve it; but see what came of stolen affections. I shall never forget the harrowing scream of Agnes, it was the most awful shriek of heartbroken agony I ever heard, it rings in my ears still. She then fell in a senseless swoon on the floor. The foul fiend prompted me—I heard him speak as though he was beside me—I looked for a weapon—the first I saw was a carving-knife on the sideboard. I whetted it against the fender in diabolical rage—I knew

not what I did — I rushed on my prostrate victim, and—"

The wretched old sinner paused again, the drops stood on his brow, his face was contorted with evil passions as he thought on the deed.

"You cruelly murdered her, you bloodthirsty villain," said the Earl.

"I did; I nigh severed her head from her body. Ah! that was sweet revenge. When I had done the deed of hell I rushed from the spot as if all the fiends chased me. There was no need—no mortal saw me, and ere the double murder was found out I was miles away. I ran for the Towers, intending to go and tell your father what I had done, and give myself up to the gallows. Life had nothing more endurable. I reached the Towers about three in the afternoon; I asked to see the Earl on important business. He was at church; I said I would stroll about the grounds till he came home. I wandered by the dell at the side of the park, and, sitting down on a fallen log, began to think on my cruel deed, and its inevitable result—the gallows. Presently I heard voices, and saw a servant-girl leading a little boy, of perhaps two years old, by the hand. She came on till she was nearly opposite me, when I heard a whistle, and saw the girl leave the child, and run to speak with a young forester some hundred yards off, who had given the signal. A plan of terrible revenge entered my head. I knew it was the little Viscount, the only son of him who had wrought my misery: it was the work of a second, the thought suggested by the Evil One, and putting it into prompt action, like a boa I rushed on my prey, seized the child up in my arms, choked its cries with my kerchief, and dived into the copse-wood towards the burn, which was then swollen with flood: I then—"

"Hold!" said the Earl, "you were then the mur-

derer of my eldest brother, and despite the consequences, you die for it."

He sprung up as if to wrestle with his foe. The old man moved not a muscle of his face, but exclaimed, "Are you mad? A cry from me brings a score of ruffians. Are you crazed? I did *not* murder your brother, I harmed not a hair of his head."

"Then, in God's name, what did you do?"

"Patience and you shall hear; interrupt me no more."

"I could listen for ever—it rivets me. Go on—I am breathless."

"I then plunged into the burn with my burden, and waded for a hundred paces or so; then I hid in a hollow tree and awaited the result. I heard the nurse cry, and saw her and the youth seek everywhere in vain. They passed and repassed my hiding-place, and then sought down the opposite way. I came forth and again proceeded a quarter of a mile, when I reached an old ruin, where I stayed till gloaming came on, and then hurried to a ken where my smuggling friends lurked. I told them nought of the murder, but said the child was only the son of a nobleman who wished me to get rid of it. That evening I started with the boy, and was taken on board a privateer, then in Leith Roads. My character was well known, and I got a place as master on board. The vessel's name was the 'Black Mail.' We weighed anchor and sailed for America. It was then the time of the French Revolution, and all the countries of Europe were leagued against France. We kept up a half privateering, half smuggling business for some years, in which I gradually rose to become the captain of the 'Black Mail.'

"About that time our country declared war against Spain, and we had a rare time of it. I cared neither for my

own life nor the lives of my men ; and under the name of Mad Helder—for I changed my name—I gained a bloody notoriety amongst the privateering gentlemen. Our vessel was well named ; she was a smart little schooner, with raking masts and heavy ordnance, and exacted black mail on friend and foe for seven years. Then our vessel grew a common nuisance ; we were a set of desperadoes. Young Viscount de Vere, under the name of Dick Foundling, grew up amongst such a set a proper young rascal ; he lisped oaths ere he could speak plainly ; he drank gin when he should have drunk milk. He was the pet of all the crew, had a deal of pluck in him, and learned to use knife and pistol, ere he could have reached the age of eight, as if he had been an old hand ! When he was nine, one evening we were running down for Cuba under full sail, a British frigate, the 'Arethusa,' hove in sight, and immediately gave chase. The 'Black Mail,' had the wind continued steady, would have laughed at her, but the breeze failed us, and the 'Arethusa' being a taller rigged vessel, caught it later than we did, and soon bore down on us. She fired a round shot across our bows, and ordered us to show our colours. Up went our black flag, and we gave them a dose of black shot with it ; but she was game at that, my Lord ; and shot and shell she poured into us till we began to settle down. Knowing we should get no quarter, we stuck out, and determined to die to a man. They boarded us, and a terrible hand-to-hand fight we had of it. I got the slash whose scar you see across my figure head there ; it stunned me ; I fell as they thought dead, and remember no more till I awoke from my swoon, found myself in the water, struck out, and soon ran foul of a piece of the wreck of the 'Black Mail,' and dragged myself aboard of it. It was a dark night, but I saw the lights of the 'Arethusa' half a league to leeward ; they

had not seen me, and I had drifted away. There was a strong current there.

"All night I sat on the wreck; it was a warm night, and I took off part of my soaked clothes and spread them to dry. Morning came, the frigate's top-gallants just peeped over the horizon. The sun rose hot; the blood clotted on my brow; I was hungry, faint, parched with thirst. I drank the salt water, it only made me worse. I strained my eyes in vain to catch a sail. I picked up a spar during the day, and had sufficient strength to set it up on the part of the stern on which I was left. I spread my sailor's coat for a sail, and soon began to move! I knew nor cared not where, so I drifted ashore or bore down in sight of a vessel. All that day and the next night I was left without food or water: the thirst was like fire. I began to think all was up, and I should have to give in, and actually thought of drowning myself. I had almost despaired when a vessel appeared; I had just strength to take off my shirt and hang it up as a signal of distress, and attracted their attention. They picked me up in the last extremity of existence. She proved a British ship, a merchantman, bound from Vera Cruz to India. I told a tale of having been a captain of an English ship knocked to pieces by a Spaniard, and was believed. My wound and wants were attended to, and as the master had lately died of Yellow Jack, I got his place, for my knowledge of seamanship was great, and I knew all the currents and pilotage of the West Indian isles well, and this was what they needed then.

"It was an evil day they took me aboard. Wild at the loss of my ship and men, specially of young Dick Foundling, I burned to revenge it on British ships. I could not abide too being under orders, and I soon stirred up the sailors to mutiny. I got nearly the whole crew on my side, and we murdered the captain, officers,

and all who would not join us. Some we hung, some we tossed to the sharks, some we made walk the plank, and we pelted the skipper to death with glass bottles! I was unanimously chosen captain. I put in at a French port under French colours, sold the cargo, and in return got aboard guns, cutlasses, and all kinds of warlike gear. Terribly did I revenge my loss. Many a noble vessel went to the bottom. We led a wild life of it for fourteen years, and then all was lost by shipwreck.

"War with America had again broken out, and I was trying to cut off English vessels going up the St. Lawrence. We were chased by a man-of-war, and overtaken in one of those dense fogs. It was near winter, and the icebergs were frequent; the cold was awful! every sea that broke over us turned to ice; the decks were like glass. The man-of-war sheered off, and we were tossed amidst the ice-fields, and wrecked on Labrador. We made a fire of drift-wood, and got what provisions we could from the wreck, but my men were frozen at the fire; a hurricane of wind almost blew away the very embers, and we commenced a march over the frozen plains. The wolves and the frost thinned our numbers, and I and another man only reached civilized country. The devil seemed to uphold me through everything for his own purposes, and my strong frame seemed invincible. We, the sad relics of a crew of two hundred brave fellows, reached Nain, a small settlement, where we stayed out the dreadful winter. There was a small English man-of-war wintering there. One of the sailors happened to have been a lad on board the 'Arethusa:' we got great chums, and amongst other yarns he told me the fight they had had with the 'Black Mail,' little knowing I had been its captain. I did not undeceive him, but I learned what I least expected, and that was the boy, your brother, had been picked up. 'He

fought,' he said, 'like a fiend incarnate;' but by-and-by was tamed and kindly treated by our Captain, who took a great fancy to him, and adopted him for his own son, giving him the name of Edward L'Estrange."

"Impossible!" cried the Earl. "Edward L'Estrange my lost brother? I know his history now. Ha! that accounts for the singular resemblance he had to the Captain. Heaven above! this is indeed wonderful. But go on."

"Well," said Bill, "I determined to find the youngster out; for my mate could tell me no more, as he had been drafted to another ship. So I set off as soon as I could to Canada, intending to take a passage home, and find if he still lived. I reached Quebec; several regiments were then wintering there, and I thought perhaps I might learn something about him. There was also another reason I had for going thither. Many years before I had overhauled a Spanish ship; there was on board a rich Don, Ramond, a passenger, and he had an only child with him, Carlotta, a pretty, black-eyed little wench of five years old or so. The old Don, when dying,—for he got mortally wounded,—commended this girl with his dying breath to me, the captain of the enemy that had conquered his ship. I had a liking to the girl, and took her to America when I next sailed there, and left her to be brought up by a sister of mine, who was living there with her husband. I had not seen this girl for twelve years, and I was anxious to see if she had grown up handsome. I was then known by the name of Bill Stacy, or Dare-devil Bill, and the girl had been called Antonia Stacy.

"Part of the Rifle Brigade was then at Quebec, and I heard there was an officer, Lieutenant L'Estrange, there. On inquiries I found out it was the same one I was seeking. He had been educated by the Commodore

L'Estrange, who had bought him a commission in the army; and he had already fought in the Peninsula. I found Antonia grown a handsome girl of seventeen; and I thought I should like to bring about a marriage between them. I enlisted in the same regiment, and in two years had risen to be a serjeant. I told L'Estrange so much of my history as to let him know I only was able to give him a clue to his early life, wrapt in mystery; and I introduced him to Antonia. But the two did not cotton together. There was another young man in the same regiment, named George Ravensworth, who greatly admired my protegée. He had picked her out of the St. Lawrence when her boat couped one evening. I told him she was of the very best blood in Spain; and, as I was anxious to get a good husband for her, and the two loved each other so well, I should not have minded their getting spliced. But our battalion was ordered to New Orleans, where we made an unsuccessful attempt to take the place; and there young Ravensworth took Yellow Jack and died. He and L'Estrange were the greatest chums possible; and his death nigh broke two hearts. He begged L'Estrange to carry a few relics to his bereaved family; and he said he would.

"War was then over; peace with America declared; and our men reached Europe in time for the grand final success of Wellington at Waterloo. After the Peace of Paris we came home. I got my discharge and settled near Brighton. I got to my old ways, and Bill Stacy's cabin was as well known as the Pavilion. L'Estrange had exchanged into the seventh Hussars before Waterloo; they were quartered at Edinburgh. He took the sword of George Ravensworth to his sister, a fine girl of sixteen. By-and-by they were engaged to marry; but your Lordship best knows why that marriage never came off! Part of the seventh were at Brighton. Amongst

other officers, whom my tobacco, wines, or Antonia magnetized, was John de Vere, who now lies dead beside us. He met me in a row in Brighton, in which Sir Richard Musgrave joined, and used to get wines and tobacco to a great extent from the cabin.

"When L'Estrange found Ellen Ravensworth had jilted him for your Lordship, he was very miserable, and came one night to ask my counsel on his best proceedings. That night Captain de Vere was with me, and I could have laughed in my sleeve to see the brothers sitting so near, and yet not knowing their relationship. They were so like that it was a joke in the regiment; but the Captain was the firmest in character, and soon overcame L'Estrange's scruples, and we made our first plot to prevent your Lordship's union with the present Countess. Our plan was to set Antonia in your way; we knew your weakness for the other sex, and determined to storm you on the salient angle. Your marriage was gall and wormwood to your brother De Vere; and this was his reason for combating it. Antonia was dressed, and taught her part; apartments opposite your house chosen; and the Captain drew your attention to her. You know the rest. Under the name of Juana Ferraras she was imposed on you. It was a double cheat; she was assured she would become a Countess, or would never have submitted; and we hoped your Lordship would take such a fancy to her as to take her with you to Scotland, when we would threaten to prove a Scotch marriage; and we knew you would rather remain unwed than acknowledge it; so that Ellen Ravensworth would be free to return to L'Estrange, and the Captain would have no family to cut him out of the title. We then put a paragraph in the papers, stating your marriage would soon take place with Lady Alice Claremont, the Marquis's sister, thinking it would disgust Miss Ravens-

worth. The bait took; and she nearly died, as you know; but, unluckily for us, she met the Marchioness abroad, and all the murder came out. Your Lordship, too, grew tired of Juana, and the first plot proved a total failure. But the Captain had more than one string to his bow, and we began a second one."

The old man paused, and again had recourse to the pigskin of wine. The Earl hid his face in his hands to conceal his emotions, at thus finding out what a system of deceit, treachery, espionage had been carried on by those he had loved, and did not even dream capable of such duplicity! The mystery was gradually being cleared up; the complications unravelled; and he saw things in a new light. He felt angry at having been made, as it were, a catspaw; sorry that he had given zest to their wickedness by his own weakness; and a feeling of uncontrollable disgust at thè narrator was only veiled by his interest in the story, and his desire to know how all would end. He dared not speak his suspicions, and yet he felt sure they would all be verified; so he determined to listen, but ask no questions.

After a slight pause, as if to rest, the old man resumed his story; but as his yarn is altogether too long for one chapter, we must divide it into two, being well aware, from personal experience, that long chapters weary the reader, whilst the same amount of narrative, subdivided with discretion, is less apt to pall, or become tedious to the peruser.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Ghost.—"Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold."
Hamlet.—"Speak, I am bound to hear."—*Hamlet.*

"YOUR Lordship," continued the old sailor, "when tired of Juana pensioned her off, gave her apartments in London, and a handsome allowance, provided she would never more seek after or speak to you again. You then went to Scotland, and soon after your arrival there Miss Ravensworth returned and met you. I was sent by the Captain to hire the Peel of Cessford as a house in which Juana might reside, and Sir Richard Musgrave was enrolled as a conspirator also.

"The Captain, L'Estrange, and he, had an interview with Juana: the two former left for Scotland to visit your Lordship; Sir Richard and the girl followed. Our second plan was to let Miss Ravensworth believe you were married, and if she would not credit it show Juana. L'Estrange called on the young lady and hinted it, even showed your letters to Juana, but she would not read them; indeed, she destroyed them, and seemed rather to love you the better, as many girls do love unsteady men with the hope of reforming them. Whilst I and the girl Juana were at Cessford's Peel, a picnic, or some such mummery, was made to the ruins, and the Captain, though very angry at it at first, tried to turn the mischance to good account.

"Juana was dressed as an Italian minstrel and taught a part to play; it was thought likely you would, with

your usual hospitality, give her a shelter at the Towers, and L'Estrange was then to show Miss Ravensworth how false you were to her, in harbouring the girl thus in disguise, whilst paying her attentions. This plan was overthrown in a curious way; Juana followed you and the lady up the wood to a cave, where she heard you propose, and Miss Ravensworth accept, on the condition you never afterwards spoke to *her*. I said she was deluded by a false hope of becoming a Countess: now she saw things in a new light, and absolutely refused to go to the Towers. That night, after much trouble, the Captain prevailed on L'Estrange to try the third scheme: he was to disappear mysteriously, and a rumour to be got abroad he had met with foul play. Suspicion was to be thrown on Miss Ravensworth, and, under disguise of officers of the King, we were to carry her to Cessford's Peel, and force her to marry L'Estrange. Sir Richard Musgrave acted his part well as officer, and, as you know, she was carried off: I and Farmer Forbes and his son played a part too as assistants. No clue would ever have been found, till we had terrified Miss Ravensworth into submission, had Juana not found out she was sister to her old lover, George Ravensworth. She went and betrayed us on the very night things were to be brought to an issue.

"The Captain and I accompanied L'Estrange to the girl's room, and then left him to settle it with his sweetheart: it appeared he had little fancy for it, and had made the preconcerted signal for assistance, when the Captain saw your Lordship and several others in sight! He and I fled by secret passages, and whilst I lay *caché*, he joined your party with the utmost coolness, and assisted in binding L'Estrange, whispering him he was true under false colours, as well as threatening Miss Ravensworth and Juana with his vengeance if they in-

culpated him. When L'Estrange was in prison, the night before his trial the Captain visited his cell at midnight, and gave him a file and rope to make his escape with, whilst I and young Forbes waited for him in the Hunter's Bog; it was a terrible night of thunder and lightning, but he made his escape, and that night he and I sailed for Germany. He was pretty hard up for money then, and not long after he married a Polish lady, the Countess Czinski, whose name he assumed. But he never loved her, and cared only for her money, and when the Captain, after having shot Musgrave, joined him, they both left for St. Petersburgh.

"It was about this time Juana gave birth to a daughter, Leonora,—who brought you here; she died soon after, and I often thought she had met with foul play; this afternoon her murderer confessed he had poisoned her in revenge for her treachery—there he lies—he was a bad man! About the time of Christmas, a year afterwards, L'Estrange, still hankering after his old lady-love, hearing from Archy Forbes the Countess was living in retirement at the Towers, proposed reconnoitring, and if practicable carrying her off. The Captain did not much admire the plan, thinking it impossible, but we came across, and he rode up to see how matters stood. The news had been false, the Towers were full, so we weighed sail, and were off in our schooner in the very dirtiest night of snow and storm I ever recollect. We had intended to go straight to Naples, but cruised down Africa, and getting aboard some Algerines, tried our hand at the slave trade a year or two, and took many a black cargo across to the West Indies, but we grew sick o' that, and having a good ballast of shiners went to Italy. From that time the Captain and L'Estrange became brigands, and taking the name of Vardarelli, a name famous, inspiring fear in every bosom,

carried on a successful trade. This morning they made an attack on an Englishman going to visit your Lordship at Foggia, and carrying rich jewels. I have already told you the rest."

The old man ceased his narrative, and again took a long draught of wine. For some moments the Earl moved not nor spoke. Tumultuous thoughts disturbed his mind, and he scarce knew what to say, or how to express his surprise at thus listening to the long records of conspiracy, plot, and crime he had been exposed to by his nearest relatives. He felt now inclined to disbelieve the whole story, now half doubting; and then his position,—the whole scene around seemed to verify the old man's tale.

"Whoever you may really be," said the Earl, "your story is one of the blackest villanies I ever heard; the actors seem to have been allied with the Evil One. And yet, what proof have I this is not an ingeniously devised tale? I must have proofs."

* "And you shall. Old Bill would but half have done his work had he no proofs,—there, my Lord (taking a bundle of papers), there lie the proofs. Those papers are signed by all the actors in my tale, and are no forgeries; you may examine them at your leisure."

The Earl took the parcel and secreted it beneath his cloak; then, rising once more, approached the mortal remains of John de Vere; once more he looked on the brother of his youth, and could scarce believe him capable of such atrocities. What a life had his been! The wild, cruel boy had grown up the careless, daredevil, vicious, young man, the infamous desperado whose power and malice terrified the whole of Southern Italy!

* N.B.—Having dropped Bill Stacy's lingo, we shall not reintroduce it.—*J. S.*

But death pays all debts, says the poet, and even here it hid a multitude of sins. There were softer memories connected with the departed: He had been the child who had shared his childish amusements; the youth with whom he had hunted, ridden, and shot; the young man with whom he shared many a scene of joy or danger. In these associations he forgot how, while he ate his bread, he had been intriguing against him; how he had plotted to procure his misery, and, by unparalleled dissimulation, seemed his friend whilst he was his worst foe,—despite all, he was his brother still. The fixed eye, the pale brow, the lifeless face asked his pity; the tears started in the good Earl's eyes as he bent over all that was once John Captain de Vere, and it was some time ere he could frame the question:—

"At least you will allow me to procure Christian burial for my poor brother?"

"It is impossible," said old Bill; "by the rules of this band he must be buried here, with all our rites. You must forget you had a brother; he will sleep as soundly here as in a marble tomb."

"By what right do you deny me my proper power? Surely it rests with me to inter my own brother."

"I know not by what right saving the right of might. You are not lord here, but I am."

"But, my fine fellow, I will soon assert my power; let me once get free from this accursed nest of robbers, and—"

"But you will not get free, my Lord, till you have solemnly sworn you will never divulge our hiding place, nor strive to find it out."

"Your terms are hard, yet I have no resource but to submit to numbers, though I dare try you all had I fair play one by one."

"You will not be put to the test, but, after you have

taken the oath, will leave as you came, and need only think of all this as a wild dream. Your brothers need not trouble you; one is dead, and will be buried with due pomp; the other is an outcast even from outcasts, and will know better than to show his face in these quarters."

"You said my brother, as I must call Edward L'Estrange, married. Had he any family? For if he had, it would seriously affect my position. As it is, I must take the highest legal advice, and see if this is all reliable evidence."

"You need not fear about your title or possessions; no son of Edward L'Estrange's will ever trouble you."

"Then he had no family?" said the Earl.

"I never said so; but you're free to think what you will."

"But tell me, had he a son, or daughter?"

"I suppose I may tell what I please, and needn't tell what I don't."

"But for God's sake tell me the truth!"

"I never have told you aught but the truth."

"I gain, from your unwillingness to tell me, he had a child; was the marriage an acknowledged one?"

"The marriage was sure enough; there is the certificate with the papers I gave you; but as to whether they had children or not, you may even think what you will."

Lord Wentworth, seeing he should gain nothing on this subject by further inquiry, dropped it, inwardly wondering at the old man's contumacy.

"I have said my say," said Bill Stacy, "and now I have only to get your oath you will never by word or deed directly or indirectly betray our retreat or ourselves, and you may go."

"Old man," said the Earl, "I give my promise I will by no means directly or indirectly betray either you,

your comrades, or your den; but I do not pledge myself to make no inquiries about Edward L'Estrange."

"You are quite free to do that, but I'll warrant you will scarce find him. He is a sly fox is Edward L'Estrange, and won't put his head into the snare if he knows it."

"Then I am free to go, and you will at least allow me to return with my child,—the unhappy child of her I so ill treated,—and let her be brought up away from scenes and men ill suited to her age and sex."

"You must promise more in that case. The girl shall pilot you back to the place she brought you from; but she must then and there leave you. You must swear that also."

"What! am I not to have my way with my own child? You trespass on the rights of nature, and because I am now in the power of evil men, exert an undue and mean advantage over me."

"I am not here to argue whether it is right or not right. You are the prisoner here, and must abide by my terms if you wish your freedom. In Scotland they say, 'He is a proud beggar who names his alms,' and he is a proud prisoner who makes his own terms, I may add."

"On my soul this is enough to drive a man mad. Here I am, curbed and fettered on all sides—"

"My Lord, you have too long been accustomed to rule, and to see everybody obey you. It is good to be under the yoke sometimes. Will you swear to abide by your promise neither to betray our resort, nor by any means win Leonora to follow you? Indeed the girl knows better than to do so, and if you tried to carry her off, neither your name, rank, nor riches should save you; so I warn you not to try. Do you swear?"

"I give my word I will not."

"Nay, but you must swear."

"Old man, were I capable of breaking my word, I were capable of breaking my oath too!"

"It matters not; you cannot leave without swearing."

"Listen; a peer of England, even in Court, swears only by his honour. You little know the worth of a peer's word; his pledged, inviolate word is the most solemn promise he can give. I give that, and my oath were not a surer pledge."

"I believe you. You may then go. Good night, my Lord. You will never again see me; but be sure of this, it was only the hospitality, the goodness, and generosity of your character saved you too from falling a victim to my snares. I can see and approve the better, whilst I follow the worse. I have not forgot that in my school-training. Farewell!"

"Farewell," said the Earl, as the old man disappeared behind the black curtain once more, "and I shall not offend you by wishing you may turn to some better occupation."

When Bill had disappeared, the Earl sat down, and, bending his eyes on the ground, began to recapitulate in his mind the extraordinary events and the *éclaircissement* he had heard that evening, whilst he waited for his guide. His thoughts also reverted to the Countess as he looked at his watch, and found it was not very far from nine o'clock, and he began to think she would indeed have cause for anxiety. From his reverie he was awoke by a soft foot approaching, and, looking up, he saw Leonora close beside him. She seemed to read in his face he knew the secret, and as he exclaimed, "Leonora, my child," threw herself into her father's arms.

"And you know now who I am, and why I loved you so well, and are come to take me from this dreadful place?"

"Alas! my child, I do know who you are; I do know you are my daughter, child of one who was worthy better things than my false love, and believe me, I shall ever dearly regard you as such. But I cannot, much as I wish it, take you from this bad place; I have given my word I will not by any means entice you to leave with me."

"And why did you give your promise?"

"Without it I should not be able to leave this cave; it was extorted from me, Leonora; but as I have given my word I cannot, under any pretext, break it, and did I do so, I believe in this lawless country it would be of little avail. But at least, Leonora, you know you have one who loves you dearly, and if ever you are without a friend, you have a friend and a father in me."

A shadow of deep disappointment passed over Leonora's brow.

"It is too bad!" she cried, striking her hands together with Italian gesture. "What power has that cruel, bad, relentless man over me? Dark and cruel as my uncle there was" (pointing to the coffin), "he was not so dreadful as the old man; but I will run away! I will throw myself on the King's protection and yours! I will—"

"Hush, Leonora, for heaven's sake! you will be overheard. At least so far I will stoutly defend you as a suppliant; but to-night it must not be; for, dear as you are,—dearly as I should love to see you ever beside me, and thus in a way pay back the debt of gratitude the Countess and I owe to your mother,—I must not do more than follow you home to-night; but shall, you may be sure, try all expedients on your behalf that do not in any way compromise my honour given."

"I am sure you will, my father," said Leonora, pressing his hand to her lips. "I do so long to see my sister, that I feel quite sad at the delay; and I so long

to show how I will love you, and the Countess, and Lady Augusta, that to be obliged to stay here among murderers and wicked men is very sad."

"It is indeed, my child; but we will pray that God will overrule it to your advantage. And now I must ask you to hasten my departure, or else my wife and your sister will grow quite alarmed: we have a long way to travel, and shall have plenty of time to speak by the way."

"You must then be blindfolded again—you will not fear your guide's faith now?" said the young girl, as she drew the scarf across her arm and folded it, with a sad smile.

"I shall not, indeed; but first I must take a parting glance at my poor misguided brother. Ah, Leonora! you cannot think what different feelings arise in my mind as I look on that cold form. As each of my race fall away in their prime, a link is broken—a blank, nothing can fill, made; and it seems like a warning voice to me that my turn must soon come!—that I should be preparing for my last change. I hope I am prepared, Leonora: and how I hope we shall all be brought to the narrow pleasant paths of righteousness! To-day I have lost and found a brother; and it makes my heart bleed to think what and who he is. But I forgot—you know nothing of these things: how much I seem to have before me!"

Intently, for some time after he had ceased speaking, did the Earl gaze on the face that was dead. His thoughts are unutterable—not to be written: that they were intense and burning his face showed; the expression sometimes approached to that of torture,—as if he was forced to credit what he least wished to believe.

He laid his hand on the marble brow of his brother; its coldness shot a thrill through his frame; and then

he turned away as though utterly cast down, and sickened in heart and soul, and with a choking voice bade Leonora bind the scarf across his eyes, glad to have the sight veiled from his view. As he stooped to allow the maiden to do so, she heard him sigh deeply; and, as she bound the Indian fabric across his eyes, she saw more than one heavy tear glide down his cheek, and drop on the folds of her scarf. She felt an answering weakness within herself, and the tears flowed faster down her cheek, as she took her parent's hand and led him on silently.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Farewell! if ever fondest prayer
For other's weal availed on high,
Mine will not all be lost in air,
But waft thy name beyond the sky.
'Twere vain to speak, to weep, to sigh;
Oh! more than tears of blood can tell,
When wrung from guilt's expiring eye,
Are in that word—farewell!—farewell!"—*Byron.*

Not a word was spoken either by the Earl or Leonora during their passage through the same long caves by which they had entered. The heart of each was too full for speech. Poor Leonora's dreams of liberation from a life she abhorred were for the present gone. It was, perhaps, the worst and darkest hour her young life had yet met. The shadow of the first cloud seems dreariest, as it sweeps over the sun-lit meadows; the darkness of the first sorrow is deepest, as it spreads a shadow over youth's sunny brow. By-and-by the eye gets accustomed to the frequent clouds; and in later years the stream of sorrows, often passing over the heart, leaves such a stony track behind, the quickness of its sensitiveness is destroyed, calloused, deadened; and what would once have crushed, scarce draws forth a passing sigh.

Whatever were Leonora's feelings, they were then fresh, poignant, and her woe seemed almost heavier than she could bear. Still she had a consolation;—she had hope! Hope that better, brighter days were in store; hope that rose buoyant over the waves of

sorrow: and she was in this the happiest of the twain!

Lord Wentworth's thoughts were darker. It was but an hour or two since he had tracked the path he now trode: but in that hour what a mass of strange adventure and harsh truth had been compressed! That space of time had been the most remarkable era in his life; that hour or two had not only enlightened him on the past in a way he could not have dreamed of, but, as it were, undone all his life. He left that cave a different man; all his ideas—all his thoughts—had undergone a change. As the earthquake in a few dread moments overturns the labours of centuries, so had the tale he had listened to overthrown the structure of his mental economy. Not only had a system of intrigue been divulged, but he had been shown how, unwittingly, he had sailed all his life under false colours. The real Earl of Wentworth he was no longer; it had been no fault of his, but he felt he was not any more the man he had been, and he felt displeased that he had so long usurped a false character.

Then he had been made the residuary of a secret in such a questionable way he scarce knew what to think. He had only to destroy those fatal papers, forge an excuse for his absence, live as he had lived, and no being would ever be the wiser;—or, if the treason did come out, it would be impossible to furnish proofs. The Earl banished such thoughts almost as soon as created in his mind, as unworthy of him. Come what might, he would ever be the true man!—he could not endure the thought of bearing a false reputation, or depriving another of his rights.

He would do nothing rashly: calm consideration, quiet, and time, were indispensable; and the matter *should* have his calm thoughts,—his time,—his whole

mental powers. Beyond this, the case would be one which involved much more in a legal point of view; for, although it might be possible to prove that Edward L'Estrange was Viscount de Vere, and in his own right Earl of Wentworth, by his career he had forfeited all title to such honours.

He was a felon by the laws of his country,—a man outlawed, and lying under the ban of God and his fellow-creatures. The point at issue was this: had his marriage been a legal one?—had he any family? For incontestably, could this be proved, then the Earl was no longer so; but the son or daughter of this marriage would succeed to the title, and himself drop into Mr. de Vere.

Lord Wentworth was a man, and felt keenly the degradation of such an issue—it was gall and wormwood to him. Though by blood L'Estrange was his brother, had he in any way merited his love? Had he not been his rival—his bitter enemy through life? And this rival—this enemy—was able to deprive him of his name, his wealth, his future peace!—and all depended on these records he held in his hand. No wonder, as he passed across the thin bridge on his way out, and heard the thundering torrent foaming and swirling beneath, he felt tempted to drop the fatal budget into the wild waters, and trust the secret to the keeping of the waves. We are glad to say his better feelings overcame the trial, and he bore up under a temptation, it is not too much to say, half the world would have succumbed to.

"No," he thought, "I will let law take its course, it were mean not to hear both sides."

The two passed the bridge, and soon afterwards arrived at the spot where they had left their horses, when Leonora unbound her father's eyes. The face of Nature had changed since he was there bound two hours ago; the moon had reached her zenith, a few only of the brighter

stars shone out, the air had gradually cooled till it was beyond freshness, and the Earl wrapt his cloak tighter round him.

Leonora blew her whistle—it was instantly answered,—a bandit broke through the woods leading two horses: they were not the same, but equally well bred, and richly caparisoned.

After assisting Leonora to mount, the Earl was soon firmly seated in his own saddle, and, giving a douceur to the man, followed Leonora slowly up the steep acclivity till they regained the road, and the scene of the morning's assault. He was surprised to find all the bodies had disappeared; the two poles were there—their burdens gone! the marks of the fray were still visible, the bodies of the disputants gone.

"What have they done with them?" he asked Leonora, pointing to the spot.

"They have taken them to the cave," answered the girl, "where they will be buried; it is not usually done—but there is fear of discovery now—so they have obliterated all marks."

"Leonora," said the Earl; "I can now talk freely with you. Do you know Naples? do you ever go there? I have my reasons for asking."

"I know Napoli well," replied Leonora, "and I believe our band, at least part of it, is going to travel thither shortly. I can go with them, they will not suspect; but why do you ask me?"

"Because," said he, "though I promised not to beguile you away—yet if you hate your present style of life, and fly to my villa at Naples—the Villa Reale—I see not how I shall compromise myself by offering you a safe asylum there, or taking you to England. However, I must have time to think it over, and I will try the power of gold on the old man."

"Alas! he cares little for money."

"Perhaps so, yet some of his band may not care so little: my first step towards your liberation must be getting a communication with you; I can always be found out, you cannot; so by your coming to me only we can fix a line of connecting link between us."

"I see," said Leonora; "but we should press on; it grows late, and your friends will get alarmed."

"True, my child, let us hurry forward."

With the words he spurred his horse into breathless speed, and side by side the two fleet animals spurned the light sand, and after a long ride reached the myrtle grove from whence they had started. The two dismounted, and then came the farewell; it may seem to some such a farewell would not be difficult, for, whatever the relationship between the two might be, they had in the course of their life been but slightly thrown together: it was not the case; each dreaded the moment, each tried to defer it, but come it must at last; and perhaps the quicker such separations are got over the better for those most concerned in them! It was no common separation—no ordinary farewell: they parted as father and child may for India, knowing they may never see each other again, for Leonora had told the Earl she was never more to meet him as the flower girl of his morning excursions, and she knew not whether she should ever be permitted to see him more; from all they knew of Bill Stacy this was extremely likely, and added much to the bitterness of parting. They never did gaze again on each other's eyes—it was the last parting here below.

"You are not going again to the Val," he said, still lingering; "could you not stay to-night with us?"

"No, it is impossible; there are those near who would prevent any such move! I am a slave yet; but I do

not go back; we have many lurking places nearer you than you would believe."

"And I am to see you no more, my poor child,—you are never more to greet me with flowers, and brighter smiles, in the Val?"

"No more; indeed it will be long ere bright smiles lighten my face; but though you do not see me, you will know I love you, and if I live, I live to think of you, and all who are dear to you and me, and when I die, my last thought will be you!"

"And so will I think of you, Leonora! often and often when——but hark! what was that?"

"The signal, I must away. *Addio!* my dear father."

"Stay one moment, see," said the Earl, drawing forth a ring which he placed on her finger; "if ever you want any favour show that ring to me, or if I am gone, to any of my family, and it will secure it for you, if it is in their power to give it!"

"*Grazzia, grazzia tanta!*" said Leonora; "and here is what will protect you and yours from every bandit in Italy; show this, and you are safe." At the same time she gave him the small paper with the hieroglyphic marks that excited the Marquis' surprise some chapters back.

"Farewell then, Leonora! you will always know where to find me, and keep the ring for my sake."

Pressing his lips to her cheek, he commended her to God's keeping and blessing, whilst she returned the kiss with Italian warmth, but her heart was too full to speak. Then breaking away she fled from him, and was soon lost in the myrtle thicket, leaving the Earl in mute wonder and grief.

In a few moments Lord Wentworth was able to collect his thoughts; he began to think it was high time to hurry home, and give an account of himself. The grove

was not far from the villa, and with hasty steps he approached his dwelling, not without those feelings all must know when, bearers of strange tidings, they draw near to relate them to unsuspecting friends.

As he approached he was somewhat surprised to see so many lights about, and still more at the groups of wondering, whispering servants in the hall, the door of which was wide open.

"God be thanked, my Lord ; you are here at last!"

"Here, why, what—what on earth is all this—what is the matter?"

"My lady is very ill," replied one.

"Ah, my lady is dying," said another.

"Ill—dying—Oh! it will drive me mad! here, out of the way—make way there. Oh, Ellen—my wife—my wife! I am coming!"

With such disjointed words did the Earl hurry to his partner's side, where, as our readers will remember, he had the joy of seeing her comparatively well again, and asleep; and, after having enlightened the Marquis on the main topics of the extraordinary affair, he retired to rest, first depositing the papers on which so much hung in his bureau, in the study where we first saw him writing. Following the Earl's example we shall also claim a short repose before again proceeding with the story, and thus close another chapter.

CHAPTER XX.

"His heart was formed for softness—warped to wrong;
Betrayed too early, and beguiled too long;
Each feeling pure—as falls the dropping dew
Within the grot—like that had hardened too;
Less clear, perchance, its earthly trials passed,
But sunk, and chilled, and petrified at last."—*Corsair.*

On the morning following these events the Earl and Countess, with the Marquis of Arranmore, deliberated over the strange tale at their breakfast table. Lord Wentworth had told everything to his wife during the early watches of the morning; and if she was even more surprised than he had been, she yet bore the trial with still greater calmness and patience. Lord Arranmore, perhaps of the three, seemed most affected; but their different ideas will best be exemplified by part of the conversation across the table.

"If you do wisely, Wentworth," said the Marquis, "you will keep this story precious quiet; if it gets about it will kick up a desperate row!—excuse the word, Countess, but least said soonest mended; and to try the case can do no possible good to unfortunate L'Estrange, and will certainly do you plenty of harm."

"But still, Arranmore, right is right; and if I am aware I am an usurper, I have no longer any right to remain so."

"Nonsense, my dear fellow; look quietly at it. Here is a fellow, a cut-throat, an assassin, a murderer,—and you, without any flattery, an ornament to our peerage; and because another old villain tells you he is your brother,—*ergo*, my Italian cut-throat becomes an

English Earl, and my Lord of Wentworth sinks into a plain gentleman!"

"You forget, he is rightful heir, and only by an adverse fate was kept from his own. Surely, Arranmore, if you were proved to be spending another's fortune by misapprehension, your duty is to restore it, as well as all you have spent."

"It might be my duty, but I should certainly never stoop to it; besides, the case is different. Suppose the cleverest lawyer in the kingdom proved to a demonstration a convict murderer was the rightful Marquis of Arranmore, d'you think I would give up name, title, and possessions to him?"

"I did not say so; but if this convict had a son how would it be?"

"You have no proof L'Estrange ever had a son. Take my advice,—burn the papers, and never trouble your brains about it again. I grant it may be very romantic, and there may be a degree of likelihood in the story; but for romance I would never let solid reality slip away. Think of your wife and Augusta;—as a father you are not bound, on mere report, to bring them to ruin!"

"I hope," said the Countess, "as I have shared my husband's prosperity, I shall be enabled to share his adversity, if it is God's pleasure; and I do hope Wentworth will be ruled by right; and whatever may happen, at least I will not add to his trials by impatience or complainings."

"I am quite sure you will always be faithful for better for worse," said the Earl, with earnestness. "No, Arranmore, depend on it, whatever course justice points to, I will go; and though it would be a trial—a heavy trial—to lose rank, wealth, and authority, still the hand that gave them takes away, and we have no right to murmur. At least it will not be for long; but, however protracted

the trial may be, I trust I shall have grace to bear it."

"That's right, dearest; I am so glad to hear you speak thus," said the Countess.

The Marquis did not appear at all of the same opinion; but with a slight toss of his head,—as much as to say, "You're a precious fool to lose all for justice,"—asked, "What do you mean to do first, if you are resolved to run such an absurd course?"

"First," answered the Earl, "I shall leave for Naples, and by all possible means try and find out this brother of mine, and then frankly tell him the truth, and leave him to decide what is to be done. The case will go before the House of Lords, and he will, I am sure, see the impossibility of his establishing any claim for possession; but if he has a family, the title must descend to them I fancy. However, the first lawyers will decide."

"And we shall lose our title either way, I suppose," said the Countess. "Poor little Augusta! I feel most for her. It will be a dark hour; but we must try by the sunshine within us to lighten its gloom."

"On my faith it is too hard! Certainly heaven doesn't seem to favour her children; for if anybody living should have been free from trouble, it was you, Countess! It's hard lines, I swear; and to think it's all in your own power. I call it a kind of tempting of Providence."

"You forget, Marquis, we are nowhere exempted from the common trials mankind is heir to; at the best we are all unprofitable servants; and as we have so long enjoyed the beams of fortune, we are least excusable if we faint before the first cloud. It is not I, but my husband, that is to be most pitied,—for I merely return to my former position in life, whilst he sinks to unaccustomed trials! But one thing I will promise him, and

that is, he shall never know any difference in me,—except that by fonder love I will try my best to ameliorate his troubles."

"God bless you, Ellen!" said the Earl; "you have ever been my better angel."

"Oh, do not say so, Wentworth; after all I only do what it is my duty to do. Think you, when I took the solemn vows at my marriage they were empty words? I have loved you in health, and wealth, and happiness; and if a few dark days have occasionally interrupted the long career of pleasures, they have been few and far between. Really, I am almost impatient to show you how well I can fulfil that part of my vows which speaks of sickness and sorrow! We have tried the better together,—perhaps," said the Countess, with a winning smile, "we are to try the worse."

The Earl looked lovingly at his beautiful partner, thinking he had indeed found a good thing when he gained such a wife. The Marquis shrugged his shoulders, as if not much liking the turn of the conversation. The Countess arose, and left the room. When she was gone he again addressed the Earl:

"I say, Wentworth, it's uncommon rum to think, if that yarn is true, that L'Estrange was so much at his own house without knowing it! that you and he should have been after the same girl; and what made you the happiest of men, made him the most miserable."

"It is more than strange; now that all is laid open I sometimes wonder the idea never struck me. His age, likeness to poor John, extraordinary early career,—so many points of resemblance! It is hard still to fancy him, not only my brother, but eldest brother; his associations too with Ellen are so curious! I see it is a painful subject to her; so I may give you the hint now to say little about it."

"Yes, by Jove! for though she was free to love whom she liked best, and was very wise to make choice of you, there is no possible doubt but that her refusal drove him distracted. After all, she got hold of the wrong man!"

The Marquis laughed; but Lord Wentworth was apparently little inclined for humour, and did not join in the joke.

"Let's have a squint at these papers," said the former. "I only just glanced at them last night; we shall see at once if they are forgeries or not. I wish, i' faith, they would turn out so, as you are determined to act like a fool."

Without replying, the Earl led the way to his study. The window was open,—the desk, unfinished letter, everything exactly as he had left it. There was, however, something present which excited his surprise, and this was a large case of mahogany left on his table, and a letter on the lid.

"By Saint Patrick, the Countess's jewel-box!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"This grows stranger and stranger," said the Earl, as he found his bureau burst open, and the papers gone.

"Are you sure you put them there?" asked the Marquis.

"Sure as death! There is some vile conspiracy yet! If they break faith with me our contract is ended; but let us read this letter."

"'A d—d cramped piece of penmanship,' as the poet says," remarked Lord Arranmore; "can you read it, Wentworth? I am not very clever at decyphering these hieroglyphics."

"I will try; let us see,—it runs something like this: —'My Lord: The jewels are turfed again, but the papers was gave in a hurry, and are taken away. Think

no more on last night, but forget you ever ran foul of Bill Stacy!"

"The villain is too clever by half," said the Marquis, "but really I am uncommonly well pleased it has turned out so; now you can have no possible excuse for making a noise. Take the writer's advice if you are wise, for whoever he be his advice is sound and good."

"I am really perplexed what I should do: I must go and talk it over with the Countess; meantime we must inform the authorities here about the savage murder last night, but I will not let out a word about my midnight adventure. If you will take a weed, I will go and see Ellen, and join you again presently."

The Marquis, conformably to advice, lighted his havanna and poured out a tumbler of light wine, anathematizing the country that produced no beer, and calmly enjoyed his "*otium cum dignitate*," whilst the Countess and her husband were busy talking over the case, and deciding what the next move should be. In about half an hour the Earl again entered the study.

"Well, Arranmore, we are at last come to a decision: we leave this immediately, first for Naples, and then England. In London I shall privately obtain the best legal advice as to the course I should pursue, and we shall then quietly await the *dénouement*. I think I need not in any way be the prime mover, but time must elapse before the excitement of the case is passed away, and we are able dispassionately to consider its *pros* and *cons*."

"Well, I congratulate you, my dear fellow! I for one shall be glad to leave for the old country, for I have paid you a long visit, and am anxious to be back at Claremont, and see my boy—at the Easter holidays; he is getting on capitally at Eton; I heard from him to-day."

"Oh did you? you generally hear pretty regularly, I think; he is a fine fellow, and we must have him up to Scotland in the summer. Dear me, Arranmore, if he and Augusta took a fancy to each other what a nice thing it would be!"

"Ha! I have long thought of that as a likely match; I hope I shall live to see them married. Faith! broadlands, and fair owners would meet. Augusta promises to grow a rare prize, and Arthur, dear fellow, he is getting up to me in height, though only twelve last October," said the Marquis, considerably overrating the young Anak's height.

A week after this conversation a travelling carriage drew up at the Villa Reale with the Earl, his wife, and daughter, and the Marquis, who was in high spirits at the thoughts of being homeward bound; he was to leave on the succeeding day, the rest following in a fortnight, as the Earl's yacht was then undergoing some slight repairs, and would not be ready before. On the next day Lord Arranmore left for Ireland, *viâ* Marseilles. After seeing his friend off, the Earl called on the Count d'Azalia, prefect of police, to inquire if the whereabouts of Adrian Vardarelli were known, intending, if he could gain the information, to try and obtain an interview. Here he learned a piece of intelligence he was least prepared for. Scarcely had he named his brother than the Count, rubbing his hands together with joy, exclaimed—

"Ah, Signore, do I know where he is? Santa Maria, do I not! safe at last in prison!"

"In prison? impossible! in prison? how did you capture him?" asked the Earl, growing very pale.

"He gave himself up, the rascal; he will never more trouble the State with his atrocious villanies. He has assassinated Luigi, his brother, and now we are only waiting the king's pleasure, before he pays the penalty of

his crimes with his life. He will tell nothing about his comrades, but the rack will find him a tongue. But my Lord, you are ill, what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, a passing faintness; I'll thank you for a glass of water."

The Earl drained the cooling beverage, and then asked, "Could I see this prisoner? in what gaol is he confined?"

"My Lord! see the prisoner, and why? Santa Maria, he is in no place suited for my Lord to enter, a felon in chains—ah! it is impossible, I fear."

"I have reasons for wishing to see this man, he is connected with my family in an extraordinary way."

"Well, my Lord, you are too well known here to incur suspicion, but you must be accompanied with soldiers, and also with a padre acquainted with the English language. There is no intention of prying into your conversation; and any secrets, if not affecting the State, will remain as safe with the holy man as if from the confessional. It is a form we cannot depart from."

"This would be extremely unpleasant to me, Monsieur le Comte; if I give my word of honour there is nothing to affect the prisoner's security, could I not see him alone? I do not doubt the honour of your priests, but not belonging myself to the Catholic persuasion I should be as well satisfied without one; it is in a family matter only the prisoner is useful to me."

"Well, Signore, as a friend, and as a great favour, I will give you a permit to see him for an hour or two: as he voluntarily gave himself up there is no fear of his trying to escape; if you will wait a few minutes I will write a permission."

"Given himself up, in a dungeon heavily chained, tortures and death in prospect, and he my brother! he the scion of a noble race, the true possessor of lands,

title, and riches! to what has he fallen!" thought the Earl, as he watched the Count pen the permit.

"I think it right to inform you," said he, as he received the pass, "it is likely I may ask the life of this Adrian Vardarelli; he is not what he seems, Comte, he is not an Italian, and I have reason to believe that more hangs on that man's life than you are aware, and possibly the British Government may relieve you of the charge. I say I believe it only, I am not quite certain, but my interview with him will tell me all; meantime there is no chance of his immediate execution is there?"

"No, my Lord, it would not take place for months. There seems some mystery about this man. I have heard before he is an Englishman."

"He is, and I have reason to believe he is a great Englishman,—a man of rank and importance."

"Ah! that would be strange, but you will not be able to see him till the evening; it is against usual regulations, and must be done under the shadow of night; and, my Lord, you will tell no one of this permit."

"I will not, not even my wife. To-morrow I will come and see you again, and if he turns out what I believe him to be, as I said, his life must be spared until the Britannic minister has corresponded with his Majesty's government. I wish you a good day, Monsieur le Comte, and am much obliged for your kind services."

True to his promise, not even the Countess was made a confidante; she observed there was something on her husband's mind, and even inquired if all was right, but seeing his desire not to be interrogated, forbore asking more. About eight at night he told the Countess he had an engagement, and also bade her not to be alarmed if he was rather late in returning. Soon after he left in a close carriage and drove to the Castel Capuano, the ancient palace of the Swabian dynasty, now used as a

court for the different tribunals—the Court of the First Instance, the Criminal Court, and Court of Appeal. Beneath the palace are dark dungeons in which many a captive has pined,—justly in requital for his crime, or unjustly, and that often, as the victim of injured innocence. At the palace the Earl's carriage stopped; he descended and was met by the Count, who to his surprise led him through the intricate passages, and then descended to the deep vaults below. A soldier of the guard carried a torch before them, and at last stopped before a heavily iron-clamped door, and taking a huge bunch of keys fitted one into the ponderous lock, and, turning it with difficulty, next unbarred and unchained this portal of captivity, and allowed the huge door to swing back on its rusty hinges with a grating, harsh creak. Two more soldiers with lanterns and muskets joined them, and the Count and turnkey then motioned the last mentioned to stand near the door, and the Earl also to enter. He did so, the great gate was again closed, he heard the bars drawn across, the chains coupled, the massive key turn in the wards of the lock, and the footsteps of the Count and his attendant fade away. An involuntary shudder passed through him as he felt himself actually within the walls of one of those dread prisons, and in a cell that the captive's voice vainly strives to pierce, whether innocent or guilty. One of the guards then addressed him, warning him he had not too much time, and had better not waste it; giving him also a lantern, and pointing to the darkest corner of the dungeon as the spot where the bandit lay. He received the lantern, and walked forward to the point indicated; by its glimmering ray he saw that the floor was uneven, and in many places so damp it resembled a marsh. The walls were old and mouldy, the moisture glistening on the huge stones of which they were built; near the floor

were many bolts of mouldy iron, built into the masonry, and from them depended rusty chains, dragging their long length on the damp cold floor, or rather soil, beneath his feet. As he pursued his way down the great dungeon he came on a dread relic—a skeleton still bound by the gyves and fetters that held it a living prisoner long years ago. A shudder again ran through him: who had that victim been? was it man or woman? he was not anatomist enough to tell; had the victim been guilty, or innocent, a noble or peasant? who should say. He passed on; the opposing wall now appeared; in the corner, on a bed of maize-straw, a chained prisoner was stretched; could that be his brother? he turned the lantern's glare on his features; he almost started back; it was as if the Captain lay before him; never had the resemblance seemed so striking before. The light, blinding the captive, caused him to pass his hand over his eyes. The Earl could see him, he could not see who his visitor was, perhaps a messenger of death. Still the Earl gazed on him, still he could hardly summon resolution to speak. It was years since he had seen that face, —years of trouble, danger, exposure, hardship; vices had left their trace behind, they had not swept away old likenesses. Last time he had seen that man was, when, tiger-like, he stood over Ellen Ravensworth, and shot the servant who saved his (the Earl's) life. And here he lay, pale, dejected, hungry, bound, with the sentence of death weighing on him, and his own dark thoughts for a prison friend.

What a fall! what an end! The gay gallant young soldier, the ardent lover, what had he come to? first abductor, then murderer, escaping from prison and just doom—not to repent, not to reform, but to sink, step by step, to descend bar by bar, the ladder of infamy till he was now on the very ground, a condemned felon. And

this is my brother still, and he is cold, and in prison, and I have come to visit him, and must speak.

"L'Estrange," said he at last, "I grieve to find you here."

The convict started up to a sitting posture; his wild eyes dilated, his hair seemed to stand, his whole frame shook, and as he clanked his gyves together the Earl thought he had never seen anything so dreadful, or any picture so like Apollyon bound.

"Ha!" cried the wretched man; "it only wanted this to complete the sum of misery; you are come to glory over my fall, to reproach me for my base attempts on Ellen, to throw my crimes in my teeth; but hear me before God—the God I have scoffed at, and all my life offended—I wished not to slay your brother, I knew not what I did; and yet it was he who brought me here—he who led me on from folly to sin, from sin to vice, from vice to crime—he who has destroyed me soul and body. Yes, abuse me for abusing friendship, mock at my woe, I have deserved it well."

"I have not come to reproach you, nor taunt you with crimes which, had it not been for a restraining Providence, I might have done myself. I came to tell you I forgive you, as I hope to be forgiven, and to see what I can do for you, to treat you as a brother, as you are."

"To treat me as a brother!" said the unhappy man, with a look of extreme surprise. "No, no, no; do not treat me as a brother, that were worse still. Taunt me with my crimes, I can bear it; with my ingratitude to you,—to you who were ever a friend; crush the viper who stung his benefactor beneath your feet, but treat me not as a brother, I cannot bear that; leave me to perish as I deserve."

"Listen, Edward L'Estrange, I speak not allegorically, I speak plainly. I come to treat you as a brother, because you *are* my brother; you may have striven to

hurt me, but you have really done me no harm, I have no cause for feeling angry. I regret your unhappy life, I mourn over your many and deep crimes, I hate the sin, I can love the sinner: take my hand, my brother, for I feel sure I shall prove you to be so—take it as it is given."

"I cannot," replied the wretched man, "I cannot do so; you are the first who has spoken a kind word for years; the first who has cared for the outcast. I honour, I love you for it, but I cannot take your hand, it would be defilement to you, agony to me; let light and darkness embrace first."

"The sinless One—our great example and guide—ever sought sinners; take my hand, I intreat you, and forgive me as I forgive you from my heart. I know unintentionally I have been the prime cause of your stumbling, let me be the first to recover you, and lead you back to virtue. Now listen to me—I have much to say to you, and when you have heard all you will take the hand you still refuse; first answer me a few questions—do you know who was your father?"

"I never saw him,—my birth is wrapt in mystery. I have heard he was some great man, and I was the unrecognized son of some one of rank in England; my early life I have told you. One only clue, or what might be a clue to the secret I have got, it is this." As he spoke he drew out a small steel casket. "It is locked; when I received it I swore never to open it till on my death bed. I am on my death bed now but I have not yet opened it; there is the key, you may unlock it."

"I will then open it," said the Earl.

He did so, and produced a small vellum on which the truth was engraved in the following words:

"This is to certify that he who was commonly known under the name of Edward L'Estrange was first born

son of Richard, 17th Earl of Wentworth, Arthur Plantagenet Vere de Vere, Viscount de Vere, who was reported to have been drowned, but was carried off by me, William Hermiston, *alias* Mad Helder, *alias* Bill Stacy, and brought up as a pirate till rescued by the captain of the Arethusa, and afterwards adopted by him and named Edward L'Estrange. That this is true can be sworn by me, by Farmer Forbes, Jeanet Forbes, his wife, and many others if required.

"Signed, BILL STACY."

The Earl then handed it to the unfortunate man, who by the dim light deciphered the writing.

"You will know now why I sought you,—why I called you my brother, and why I asked your forgiveness?"

"Oh! this is awful news," exclaimed Viscount de Vere, as we shall now call him, without giving him the title he was rightful possessor of, as it would only make confusion. "And I have been a fratricide, and all my life waged war against my family!"

He covered his face with his hands, and his thoughts were burning, intense, horrible!

"That miscreant Bill! If I ever saw him again—and you think it is reliable. Ha! how often have I heard about Arthur de Vere, and his strange loss: little I thought it was I. And the Towers my own house, and you all brothers and sisters, and I have made some wretched, and slain my brother, and disgraced my race and name! Would God I had filled that little empty coffin I have seen in the vaults at Dun Edin Towers! Oh! if I had been drowned. Why did I live to become the monster of guilt I am?"

"It is useless to sigh over what is done; you must try and reform and make the future redeem the past. Yours has been a wayward fate,—born to rank and ho-

nour which you never succeeded to, born with a mind meant for better things, a rich soil on which not flowers, but weeds, have luxuriated! The victim of bad men, you have sunk to infamy; but 'though your sins be as scarlet' recollect they may be made 'white as snow!' the greatest sinner may yet repent!"

"Too late—too late." They were the only words the hapless man could utter, so overwhelmed was he at first by the intelligence.

The Earl stood silent too, then Viscount de Vere spoke:

"Wentworth, whatever are my rights I have forfeited them. Will you grant my dying wish, and that is never while I live mention this. When by my death I have atoned for my crimes record my unhappy fate on my tomb stone. Keep your name—use your wealth as you ever have done, shine the star you have ever shone, and leave your poor misguided brother to end the short time he may yet have to live in prison."

"I have no right to do so if you have any family;—tell me, had you ever son or daughter?"

"Never that I knew of; it is true I did marry, but I left my wife very shortly after our union, and since have never heard of her."

"At present," said the Earl, "all I can do for you is to try and have you removed to a more comfortable place than this damp dungeon, and supplied with bed and proper food. I shall I, think, have influence with the government to enable you to pass the remainder of your life in seclusion, with every comfort that money can bring; of course you must remain abroad, and let me beseech you to devote your time to religion, and seek to enjoy endless happiness above! You need not think it is too late—greater sinners than you have found pardon and peace; and then if your life here has been a sad one, it will all be forgotten there!"

"It is useless—there is no hope for me in this world, nor the next. There is one thing I ask, and you will grant it I am sure; it is this, that the Countess would come and see me. Oh! if I could only see her once more, and know she forgave me I could die happy."

"I am sure I may promise you that request. I shall see you again to-morrow; till then adieu, for I hear them at the door. Is there anything you would like that I could procure?"

"Nothing but rest, and I am not likely to get that."

"Adieu, then, and God in his mercy grant the reigning powers may give a favourable hearing to your case; at the worst I can appeal to the House of Lords, but even then there would be little hope."

The brothers then parted, and the Earl left with the Count. In conclusion we need only say nothing could be done for the prisoner without an interview with the King, which the Earl solicited for the following day; but he obtained leave for the Countess to pay a visit to the unhappy man, and then bidding the Count good evening, and placing a purse of gold in the guard's hand to procure any comfort his brother might wish, he drove home, and recounted the adventure to his wife.

"Will you go and see him there?" said the Earl.

"It will be a great trial, but I must nerve myself to it. How impossible it seems to believe that he is your brother and mine too!"

"I shall crave an audience of the King to-morrow after leaving you there, and whilst I am away you can converse with him. If I procure his freedom we must try and get a residence either in Sicily, or some of the neighbouring islands, where he can lead a retired life, and occasionally see his friends. There is one thing sure, and that is his life is now a short one,—he has

already reached an age few De Veres ever attained, but I only hope your influence may yet do something to lead his mind to better things. I wish I could have seen in him repentance rather than remorse for his life of crimes."

CHAPTER XXI.

"Oh! had I met thee then, when life was bright,
Thy smile might still have fed its tranquil light;
But now thou com'st, like sunny skies,
Too late to cheer the seaman's eyes,
When wrecked and lost his bark before him lies!
No—leave this heart to rest, if rest it may,
Since youth, and love, and hope have passed away."

Moore.

We return to Viscount de Vere. When the Earl had left him, the guards had departed, the door been bolted and barred, and lights fled, he felt indeed alone. The dungeon in which he was confined was cold and dark, but scarcely so cold as the past seemed to him, and scarcely so dark as the future. Seldom, perhaps, has such an adverse fate ever followed mortal,—seldom has one seen an instance in which one who might have graced the rank to which he was born, has been, as it were, crushed to be a disgrace! We can afford to look harshly on the character of Captain de Vere; but pity must mingle with our frown when we look fairly on his victim. In the expressive words of the poet we have before quoted,—

"His heart was formed for softness—warped to wrong."

He had no right to become what he did. Had he had ordinary advantages, he might have lived to be an ornament to his profession, and an example instead of a beacon to warn others from the shoals on which he had wrecked his bark. We have only to glance over a few of the turning points in his life to see this. An innocent child,—not for his own fault but his father's,—is carried off by a wronged and desperate man. Had this not

occurred, in all probability he would have grown up in his right position, and this tale would never have been written. This child, bred as a young pirate, nurtured among the wildest scenes of vice and bloodshed, was by a happy incident, rescued from this odious life; and had the action that delivered him destroyed his evil angel, Stacy, he would have still, in all likelihood, reflected honour on his rescuer. In the changes of life this young man and his destroyer are again thrown together, and an evil acquaintance begun. His greatest friend is cut off by yellow fever, and bearer of his sword, he makes his first acquaintance with her, his wild passion for whom sealed his woe. Once more he is thrown amongst his own family as a stranger, and as a guest enters his paternal hall.

His brother, in a high position at his expense, sues for and obtains the love of his adored one. No marvel the fiend of jealousy burned within him. He seeks Stacy as a counsellor, and by another strange mischance, meets his brother the Captain. From that fatal night we may date the first move downwards; like the train on the incline he began slowly,—his descent became swifter and swifter,—till at last, unable to arrest his dread pace, with fearful rapidity he rushed down the steep of sin and misery to the gulf of everlasting woe! He tried, first by deception, then by passionate entreaty, to regain the heart he had lost. Then came the second lost opportunity,—the night at the Towers, when a little firmness would have stayed his decline. He was of a wavering mind, an unfixed will, and the stern, strong-minded Captain outflanked him, and the second stage of infamy began.

We need not recapitulate the abduction of Ellen Ravensworth, the relief, his rescue from prison, subsequent disgraceful life, and attempted outrage on his old flame. Attachment had lost its pureness, all its hallowed

light was shadowed, dimmed, departed; yet who could read of the last wrest from his native land, or see the hopeless passion in his black heart, when he felt himself wrung away from love and virtue, yet hating the life of crime he was drifting to, without feeling pity for the lost, erring man against whom the stars seemed to fight in their courses! After that fatal night the scene grows darker; we pass over the slave dealer and bloodthirsty brigand; the fearful quarrel, where brother mixed with brother in mortal fray; the escape, and the surrender; and we are now gazing on the actor of so many dreadful scenes lying a chained convict in a Neapolitan gaol.

We last saw him flying with his blood-won prize;—what has become of her—of Caroline Lennox? Often in a heart black as night there lingers something human,—something which, if it be not virtue, is so like it that it is attractive the more so for being alone amid a host of evil passions,—an Abdiel among innumerable false ones! Such a glimpse of better days shone in Adrian's mind, when he first resolved to save Caroline, and for her sake perpetrated the dark crime. At the first town he arrived at, Arriano, he left the young lady at the inn, giving also full directions that everything should be placed at her command which money could buy; for this he gave the host a purse of gold, at the same time threatening him with Adrian Vardarelli's vengeance if he failed to give an account of it. That name was sufficient to instil terror into the man's heart; and Caroline lacked no good thing till she was rescued from her sad position and sent to Scotland. Here (at Arriano) we leave her for the present, and follow Adrian, who, by forced marches, reached Naples, and at once gave himself up to the authorities; he was flung into the gaol where we found him, loaded with chains, till the merciful authorities chose to end his sufferings by beheadal or hanging.

He was a man then more sinned against than sinning,—led by worse advisers to perpetrate deeds which, left to himself, he would never even have thought of. Since the Earl's visit to him, and the discovery of his real position, his mind had grown darker and darker; so miserable did he become that death would have been a friend! It had been better he had never known it. One thing alone shed a ray, not of hope, but comfort in his night of sorrow: this was the thought he should ere long see her for whom he still entertained the liveliest affection. Strange it should have been so!—she whose broken plight had brought him to his present low estate, was yet dearer than all else; she was the only being he yet desired to live for. He felt he must have forfeited her love, her regard,—but not her pity. To hear her say, "I forgive;" to press the hand he had once pressed, when sincere and faithful; to hear the voice he loved and had heard in better hours; this would be the last joy he should rejoice in; and then, having bid farewell to her, having feasted his eyes once more, welcome darkness, welcome death! He was roused from such thoughts by the re-entrance of his keeper; this was unusual, and he began to wonder what it might mean. It was the Earl's gratuity to his guard which occasioned the surprise; in his eyes his prisoner was now a very different person; one who enjoyed the protection of the great English lord was very different from the friendless captive; and anxious to make reparation for the past, the Italian soldier, Giacomo, was bearer of a good repast, whilst two other men brought a mattress, on which the outlaw might lie more comfortably, as well as a sheepskin to cover him.

"Is there anything else Signore would like?" asked the guard of his astonished prisoner.

"Yes," replied Viscount de Vere. He then whispered

something in the man's ear; a gesture told him he understood his meaning. The man then unbound his hands and feet, left a lantern and his supper, saying he would bring what he asked for early next day, and consigned him once more to solitude and his dark thoughts.

When the doors were barred the unhappy man rose, stretched his limbs, ate a few morsels of bread, drank a deep draught of spirits, and then began to pace his cell, backwards and forwards, as long as the light befriended him. Ere long the lamp began to flicker, the wick was burned to the socket, and it lit up, and darkened the prison with spasmodic convulsions, till it went out and left him in total darkness. Groping his way to the miserable bed, he stretched himself on it, drew the sheepskin over him, and actually slept.

He was awoke by the noise of the door being unbolted; soon afterwards Giacomo appeared with his breakfast,—the first one he had seen,—thanks to the purse! he also received from his keeper a small parcel, from which he tore the paper, and produced a glass phial full of a liquid as clear as water; he drew the cork, placed the bottle beneath his nose, and then, as if satisfied it was what he wanted, recorked it, and hid it under his vest.

"An English donna is going to visit Signore," said Giacomo.

"At what hour?"

"Afternoon, I think."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Viscount de Vere, clasping his hands together. "Leave me now;—no,—stay,—bring paper, pen, and ink."

In a short time these were brought, and the Viscount began to write. Several times he tore up what he had written; at last, as if satisfied with the contents, he folded the sheet, and addressed it to—

"*The Right Honourable, the Countess of Wentworth.*"

He also placed it beneath his vest. He then walked again hurriedly up and down his cell, often marking a ray of sunshine which crept along the damp ground—this was his timepiece. So accurately had he noticed its travels, he seemed to know the very minutes of its onward march. Hours rolled on. The beam had reached the allotted distance. "'Tis noon," he involuntarily exclaimed, drawing a long, deep sigh.

A few minutes, and he heard a footstep approaching the door, the key grated in the wards—he shuddered, and staggering rather than walking to his couch, threw himself on his breast, and buried his face in his hands. He heard the door open, and soon afterwards a light step approaching him—it ceased—she stood beside him. With a sudden exertion he sprung up and threw himself on his knees; for a few seconds he dared not look up; at last he raised his eyes—yes, there she stood, the lady of his love; long years had passed since he last saw her, but she was the same Ellen, her beauty matured, but unimpaired; she stood like his good angel, weeping over her lost charge; tear after tear gathered and fell from those large, blue eyes. This was his third strange interview with the adored idol of his heart. Once he had kneeled at her feet and from those lips heard the fatal words that sealed his doom; once he had stood the brutal oppressor over the weeping suppliant; now he kneeled at her feet, the convict prisoner; each had been a darker shade. On former occasions twice had Ellen opened the conversation, this time she was unable to speak, and it devolved on him to break silence.

"Ellen," he said, "unworthy as I feel to take your pure name on my defiled lips, do you forgive me? Oh! say so, and I die happy."

"Edward, I have nothing to forgive; I have forgiven long ago; it is I who should ask forgiveness of you."

"Thanks, lady, I can now die happy."

"Ah, Edward—for so I must still call you—to die happy there is need of forgiveness of sins; but why do you talk of death? I do hope and believe Wentworth will be able to procure your freedom, and then let your remaining years try and make up for the past, of which we will speak no more."

"No, I shall never leave this dungeon; it is too late now. Mine has been a wayward fate, it will soon be over. I have been too black a criminal; I have long bade adieu to hope."

"Ah! say not so; you little know the power of grace. Sinners greater far than you have been washed and made clean; why should you despair?"

"Ellen, it is useless to speak thus; I tell you I am lost, eternally lost. Had my life been different, had you been what you might have been to me, it would have been far otherwise; but regrets are useless, you have come too late to save me from the reward of my crimes."

"Oh, Edward! I know I have been deeply to blame, I know it was my change of sentiments to you that worked your ruin; to my dying hour I shall never cease to mourn over my fault. Oh, if I was the first to lead you astray, let me be the first to guide you back, and if in this world we have been severed, in that which is to come we shall meet to part never more. I speak as a sister now, as I am; dear brother, say not it is too late."

"Ellen, do not blame yourself thus. How was it possible you should love me? your heart was free, and because denied to me, I strove by mad violence to regain it, and lost all, deservedly."

"But you have it now, not as it was, but in a new light, a sister's love; and as a sister I have mourned over you; and often, often have I remembered in my

prayers my erring friend. Oh! let them be granted by my seeing you put away the old man and be renewed in spirit."

"Alas! it is all to no purpose. I am lost, lost."

"You mistake the Gospel, it saves to the *uttermost;* the veriest outcast can find peace, for every sin there is forgiveness."

"Save one—you forget the verse, 'There is a sin unto death.'"

"But we know not what that is, and while life lasts the greatest sinner may return; the prayer of the dying thief was heard, so will yours be heard and answered."

"Vain, vain, I tell you, Ellen; I cannot pray; the Spirit left me long ago. I know the very night—the very hour—he left; that night I sold myself to the devil, the night I agreed to the diabolic plot against you, Ellen. Since then I have never felt aught save remorse, no desire to be better; prayer has frozen on my lips, I am a reprobate."

"You think too darkly. Oh! try and pray with me; resist the evil spirit, and he will flee from you."

The Countess knelt down beside the wretched man, and offered up a fervent prayer to heaven for him. He heard it with a cold, gloomy expression, and when she ceased, only said, "I cannot say amen; I tried, but it is impossible; believe me, Ellen, I am lost,—and, what is more, I mourn not my lost heaven. I want not paradise, but rest. Could I rest for ever in the dark grave 'twill be enough. I have seen you, I have heard you forgive me; the voice I loved in better days to hear has thrilled through me; I have had all I want, leave me to finish life as I deserve. Why should you or my brother trouble yourselves more?"

Tears of sorrow again coursed the Countess's cheek, as

she bent over her old lover, and, taking his hand, said, "Do you love me, Edward?"

"Love you? yes; beyond all things earthly and divine. Ellen, you are the only being I love," answered the Viscount, with wild emotion.

"Then, if you love me, you will try and prepare for that place where I humbly hope—nay, believe—after death I shall live; you would not wish to be parted both in time and in eternity?"

"Ellen, you ask an impossibility. Ask anything else. No, it is not my wish, but so it must be. In this life I have seen you afar off, in the life that is to come I must see you afar off too. Oh! that we had never met. Do you recollect what I said when on my knees, which were never bent to man or to God since that moment? did I not say your refusal would drive me to desperation? see what it has done. I do not blame you; I have myself to blame: but ours was an ill-starred acquaintance—an ill-starred love. No, no, you will mourn for me here; you will sometimes give a passing thought to one who adored you so, for never was needle truer to the north than in weal and woe my heart has been to you. This is all I ask; and for me, I am not worthy to love you,—you are like a star I may look up to and worship, but which is at once shrined far above my affection or my hate."

For a long while after the Viscount ceased no word was uttered by either. The scene was at once a striking and a sad one. The prisoner had sunk back on his side, and, resting on his left elbow, gazed on the lovely being who knelt beside him with her hands clasped, and her eyes turned heavenwards. Her lips moved as though she were breathing a fervent petition for her brother. How marked was the contrast between the expression of those two!—vice had sullied the handsome features of one; virtue had lent a purer radiance to the sweet face of

the other. How strange the contrast of their hearts!—one like the glacier, cold, dead, unmelting; the other like the warm sunbeam, which, alas! throws its brightness, but thaws not the icy mass it shines on. How different were their thoughts!—one was thinking with remorse on his wretched past life, without hope of a future; the other, whilst mourning over the falsehood which had worked such a ruin, was still ardent with hope that in due time her prayers would be answered; and as the mastless, rudderless vessel, tossed and well nigh wrecked on the tumultuous billows, can yet be refitted, and with a wise captain and pilot steer her way to the haven she was bound for, so would this erring man forget, in that plenitude of rest, peace, and happiness, the storms and tempests, shoals and rocks, of the voyages that had brought him thither.

This silence might have lasted still longer had not the entrance of Giacomo broken it.

"My lady," said he, "Milord wishes to see you; would you follow me?"

The Countess rose. "Adieu, then, for the present, Edward; I shall pray for you, and you will show your love to me by thinking more calmly. I will come and see you again soon, and I hope in another place than this."

She held her hand out with a mournful smile; the Viscount seized it and pressed it to his lips, his heart was too full to allow him to frame the word "adieu." The lady turned away; he watched her till the dark door shut her out from his view, then, sitting up, took the small phial from his breast, laid the letter on the bed beside him, drew the cork, and tossed it from him. "I have nothing more to live for since I have seen her; there is no spot on earth I could live at, and feel she was another's wife," thought the hapless man. "Farewell, Ellen! a long farewell."

He then emptied the contents of the bottle over his throat: it was prussic acid, and with fearful rapidity did its fatal work! he felt the hand of death on him whilst he was even swallowing it, sank back, uttered a faint cry of distress, and ceased to live, in less than a minute after swallowing the dreadful draught! So died he, poor erring man! So died he who should have been a peer of England, and yet ended his life a prisoned brigand, a suicide!

When the Earl sent for the Countess it was to inform her that he had procured the necessary pardon for his brother.

"He is in an unhappy state of mind," said the Countess, "but I have hopes that the very fear of unworthiness he has is the first fruits of repentance, and the foretaste of better thoughts."

"God grant it may be so," said the Earl; "but now let us go and tell him the good tidings; it will doubtless have a favourable effect on him, for freedom engenders far better thoughts than captivity."

Together they sought the gaol once more, eager to bear the glad tidings. When they entered, the Countess hastened forward: the fixed features, the glassy eye and clenched hands, the empty phial beside him, told the dread truth, and with a cry of terror, she sank in a dead swoon at the side of the hapless victim. The Earl, terrified at the dangerous effect it might produce on his wife, and shocked at the catastrophe, called for assistance, himself bore the senseless lady from the terrible scene, and attended to her first. It was long ere she recovered the dreadful shock she had sustained, and even when her consciousness returned she wept in such an hysterical manner, as to alarm her husband not a little. When she reached the villa she became calmer, but it was many days ere she again left her room.

The Earl, after seeing his wife in safety, returned to the prison, and long gazed in silence on the remains of the wretched suicide: he found too the letter addressed to the Countess; it was a very sad one.

"December 25. Castel Capuana.

"When you read this I shall have ceased to breathe: life has to me been a weary load, and I am glad to shake it off. It might have been far different, and 'tis the thought of what might have been makes the present hour so bitter. You might have been mine, and I might have been great, and good! but what matters what might have been, I have to do with what *is*. No joy to look back on, no heaven to look forward to, I am a heartbroken man. I have been the dupe of others,—my crimes have been my misfortune rather than fault. I have no redeeming trait save love to you; can the guilty love the guiltless—the vile love the pure? my passion answers all, 'I loved the right, the wrong pursued.' I have been a bane to my family, I might have been a blessing! You forgive me, Ellen: it is all I want! Forget such a one as I ever lived. I ask the tribute of one tear at my sad fate; you will not deny my last request. Oh! Ellen, it gives the sting to death, this separation from you, but it must be so. Farewell!

"Sometimes in quiet hours think of his luckless fate, who loved you too well,

"Ever your deeply attached,
"ARTHUR DE VERE."

"P.S. This is the first, and will be the last time I ever signed my real name. Ask my brother, to whom I have been so unworthy a brother, to see that my remains are decently interred. Tell my story on my tombstone, then bury me out of sight and out of mind. This last act of my wretched career may be the worst,

life has lost its charm—pardon me the pain this crime may give you."

When the Earl read this letter to his wife it was with bitter grief she heard his last, worst deed—and we need not say she often thought of that misguided man, shed not one but many, many a tear, and thus fulfilled his last petition. Ah, what an end had her young lover come to!

The remains of Viscount de Vere were interred in the grounds of the Villa Reale, and over his tomb rose a marble fane with the following inscription—

Here lies
ARTHUR PLANTAGANET VERE DE VERE—
VISCOUNT DE VERE,
EARL OF WENTWORTH,
a title
to which he never succeeded!
By an unaccountable fate—stolen in his infancy;
misguided in his manhood.
He died by his own hand on the
25th of December,
MDCCCXXIX.
Aged XXXIX.

"Oh breathe not his name, let it sleep in the shade
Where cold and unhonoured his relics are laid."

A few days after the funeral, which took place at the dead hour of midnight, the Earl and Countess with their daughter left Naples by their yacht, and sailed for Leith, where they arrived safely after a long and stormy passage. They then started for the Towers, where they lived in deep seclusion.

Mr. Scroop had meanwhile started for Italy to bring home the unfortunate daughter of his murdered father-in-law, and make arrangements with the authorities for bringing his murderers to justice, a point, however, in which they entirely failed to succeed.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Lovely in life, and unparted in death."—*Anon.*

About two months after their arrival at the Towers, the Earl and Countess in the garb of deep mourning were walking together down the Holly Walk. We do not know why they chose that peculiar place, fraught with so many sad recollections; however, they silently trod the verdant path, and seated themselves on the selfsame bench where young Ravensworth had last sat, where Lady Florence and Ellen rested on the morning of his departure.

"Ellen," said the Earl, "we have now been united for twelve years, and never has one unkind word or action marred my domestic bliss; you have been my partner in joy, my solace in woe, and as our family tree is stript leaf by leaf, and we two, and our bud Augusta are alone left, I often think what should I do without you."

"My dearest Wentworth, I have often told you it is but my duty—a delightful one—to try and be a helpmate instead of hindrance to you; and I may say too during all our married life I have never seen an unkind look,—you have been my love and faithful lover in a way unhappily too rare."

"Yes, we were made for each other, Ellen; they say marriages are made in heaven: I am sure ours was, for by my union with you I have won everything in this world and the next. I have lived to see and admire your silent example, lived to see its blessed fruits in my two sisters, lived to follow and value religion, and to

feel the assurance that our hearts are bound not only now, but to all eternity in cords of everlasting love."

"Give to God the praise, dearest Wentworth; if I have been the unworthy instrument of leading you from earthly dross to eternal and unchangeable riches, I have been *only* the poor instrument, but this seems my happiness; to hear my best loved speak so is the bright answer of many, many prayers. I knew they would be answered. I felt sure you were mine both upon earth and in heaven!"

"Ah, Ellen, it is in this one sees the reality of religion. What are rank, earthly honours, position, wealth, if only to be used or abused here? What are all to a dying man? Yes, it is one thing to talk of death, one thing to enjoy life, as if death existed not,—it is another to know our end is near, to feel we must soon lose all; leave the world naked as we came into it, tread out on empty space, quit our firm footing below! had we then no assurance that around us were the everlasting arms, what would all earthly joys do for us? but thanks to heaven, and to you for leading me to seek that treasure where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, I feel that if called to die this night I could die happy. There might be the pang mortal man must own when his breath forsakes him, there might be the human dread of the cold tomb, the pain of the wrench from those we love below, but my mind would be happy, happy in the thought I should soon see you again, and those I loved, and have darkly lost."

"True, dearest, and earth has so little left us now, it seems as if we were called to think more on heaven! Every tie seems severed but one—our daughter. I would endure to live for her and for you, but certainly most of our dear ones are beyond the grave, and there my heart often soars too."

"I have a strange presentiment, dearest Ellen, that I shall not long be spared to you. Since my brother's death I have felt the shadow of the tomb overshading me! Whether it was the awful scene of his self-destruction, or the air of the damp dungeon in which he was confined, I know not, but I have never felt the same man since. I think I shall soon go too!"

"Ah! say not so," said the Countess. "Oh, Wentworth! you must not leave us. It is a different thing to speak of death and to see our dearest fade beneath its cruel breath! You must take advice, dear, and change the air. This uncertain climate, after so long a residence in Italy, is not suiting you. Promise me you will take advice."

"It is needless, love; no doctor could avail. Remember the Weird; remember what I told you in the grot where I sought and won your hand and heart. Ours is a strange family! Coming death with us casts his shadow ever before. I have long been under that shade. No, Ellen, it is come at last; I shall never see the summer roses! Spring is now putting out her buds and early leaves, but summer's flowers will blossom over my tomb."

"Oh! my dear husband," said the Countess, with tears in her eyes, "do not talk thus, and break my heart. Oh! live for your Ellen! it will kill her if you die. Live for Augusta! Oh, do not—do not leave us."

"I hear the voice that calls me, Ellen; you must not weep so; it will only be for a little while we are separated; it is but a *narrow* stream, and you will live and bring up our pledge of fondest love, little Augusta; let her be your second self, and I will look down on you, and be very near you still, only the thinnest, airiest veil will lie between us. I believe, and I think many believe with me, our departed friends are close beside

us. I doubt not Edith and Florence are very near now ; we cannot see, nor feel, nor hear them, but 'tis only the breaking of life's silver cord that severs us."

"Wentworth, if you die your Ellen will not long survive you. Do you recollect too what I told you when we pledged our faith? that not even death should part us—it will not, I feel sure. But here comes Augusta with early flowers, dear child ; let us speak of happier things. Come, darling, you must banish these thoughts of gloom ; you will be spared long to us both, I am sure."

The Earl shook his head, and rose to greet his little daughter, who had made a bouquet of sweet primroses, violets, and snowdrops, gathered by the burn's side, for her mother. The Countess received the offering with a smile, kissed her daughter, and the family group then returned to the Towers, conversing on ordinary topics. Still through the remainder of the day a cloud often darkened over the Countess's face as she thought on the morning's conversation ; and her husband's words, alas ! too prophetic in their doom, rung like a death-knell in her ears.

She could not help noticing a peculiar and unusual heaviness about the Earl ; he was not like himself all day, and retired to rest at an early hour. Lady Wentworth's fears were, however, partially chased away by the good spirits in which her husband rose next morning. He asked her to accompany him on horseback, with Augusta, to some of the surrounding farms, which she gladly acceded to. They returned at luncheon time, and shortly after that meal her anxiety was first awakened by a rather alarming giddiness and faintness which suddenly attacked the Earl. It was some time ere he recovered his sensibility, and then a severe headache oppressed him, growing so bad that before evening the Countess prevailed on him to allow her to

send for the physician. The latter at once perceived it was from fever that he was suffering, and ordered him to bed. For some days no bad symptoms were observed; the doctor was quite sanguine, and told the Countess that he doubted not but that the unimpaired physical strength of the Earl would get the better of the disease. About the eighth day, however, unfavourable symptoms first showed themselves, and the fever assumed the low typhoid form. Another medical adviser was called in. From the first, however, the Earl had told the doctor he should not recover; but this was kept from the Countess, who hoped on still. The fell disease ran on its course, every day the fever became fiercer, and at last even Ellen saw there was little hope of his recovery. The fever did its work of ruin with ruthless vengeance, prostrating its victim, and undermining his strength, till the stout Earl was reduced to the mere shadow of what he had been. From the eighteenth day more or less delirium and stupor set in, and he knew no one, not even Ellen, who with unremitting care had watched him through his illness, and never once left his side, scarcely closing her eyes.

The crisis arrived: for twenty-one days he had been stretched on the bed of sickness,—for nearly four delirium triumphed. About noon he opened his eyes, and when he saw his pale loving wife sitting by him holding his hot dry hand in her own, and chafing his temples, he smiled and articulated the word "Ellen." She eagerly drunk the sound—it was life in death to her.

"You know me then, dearest, you are better?"

"Yes, I know you now, my love. I feel better, but I am very weak. Go and take some sleep, dearest, I shall be better soon."

Exhausted with the exertion of speaking so long, he sank back on his pillow. Ellen kissed his brow softly,

and whispering, "I shall soon be back, darling," left him to seek Nature's great restorer, of which the gentle lady had so much need. She never saw him again; she never more came back to sit at his loved side. The fatigue of twenty-one days' watch, twenty-one nights' sleepless vigil, was too much even for her system. Her head ached throbbingly, she could not sleep, so hot and fevered she grew; and when trying to wrestle with tired Nature's demands, she again rose to continue her labour of love, she sank exhausted on the ground. She was placed on a sofa and restoratives employed, but without effect, and about the hour of sunset the doctor pronounced life fled! The Earl recovered from the fever, but not from its effects. He never rose from the bed on which he had so long lain, but during the five days he still survived he was blessed with the full possession of his reason. He missed his kind attentive wife, and often asked after her. Fearing the effects of his learning the sad news, the doctors for some time deceived him so far as to tell him she was only ill, very ill, or would be beside him.

"Why is she not brought here?" he asked. He read the answer in the face of his attendants. "Tell me the whole truth, hide nothing from me—Ellen is no more."

"She is in heaven,—she is happy. My daughter is safe now beyond the storms of life," said Mr. Ravensworth, who stood beside his couch.

"She has been faithful to death," said the dying man, "and has received her crown of life before me. I can die calmer now. I shall see her again very soon. Call my daughter, Augusta; I must bid her adieu. Has the Marquis arrived yet?"

"He is expected every moment," said Mr. Ravensworth. "Mr. Power is also here. Would you like to receive the Sacrament?"

"Yes, much—very much. You will share it with me, will you not?"

"I will. Shall I call Mr. Power, then?"

"Yes, now,—and Augusta."

The dying man sank back, and closed his eyes,—he seemed lost in prayer,—so much so he did not notice either Augusta, the clergyman, nor the Marquis, who had just arrived by express speed, and stood by his friend's bed with clasped hands, and eyes wet with tears. The Earl opened his eyes.

"Call Andrew and Philip. I feel death's hand upon me now. I must take leave of my faithful servants."

Some one left the room quietly; and soon afterwards the *leal* old butler, and Philip, as well as several other servants, amongst whom came Wilton, entered the chamber of death.

It was the hour when early dawn first glows the orient skies. That rising sun would be the last that would ever lighten the Earl's eyes! It was a lovely morning in late spring,—a dewy coolness breathed over the woods and plains,—the first rays were shedding their radiance on the distant hills,—the old Towers were just catching the descending glory,—birds were singing, flowers unfolding, and timid deer shaking the dewdrops from their flanks. It was the infancy of the day,—the birth of the light,—the morning of the natural world,—the spring of the year. It was all this without. To have walked over the verdant park,—to have wandered through the green woods, with their vernal leaf,—to have tracked the bubbling rivulet,—to have breathed the fresh morning air,—to have watched the matin glow,—to have heard the bird's early carol,—to have glanced at that fine old mansion,—who would have thought of death? Everything was life! Everything was gladness without those walls! Who

would have thought of death within? And yet the owner of these broad estates,—these woods,—flood and fells,—the lord of that ancient castle,—the master of all we see,—was then *dying*. The lady of his love,—the mistress of all we see,—*dead*!* Ah! what a different scene is within that pile! Let us open the door of the banqueting-room — the room where wine and merriment had often made the long winter evenings seem short—the room where we have seen so many of the noble family and their friends pass the wine-cup that circled the halls with glee! Let us see what is there now. The great table is clothed with crape; the walls are draped with black; and on that table lies a narrow coffin. There is nothing funeral about its appearance; it is covered with white velvet, and ornamented with silver; white silken ropes pass through the handles, and each has a wrought-silver tassel. A bright silver plate shines in the centre,—above it the coronet and arms of the Wentworths are engraved,—on it are the simple name and age of the departed one,—

ELLEN, COUNTESS OF WENTWORTH,
Aged 31 years.
She sleeps in peace!

On the lid a wreath of white roses has been placed, as a tribute of undying love, by Augusta. There is something bright in the death of such a being,—it is the birth into glory!

Let us next ascend the staircase, and, passing along the corridor, open the door of the Earl's room. Here another sad sight awaits us. On his dying bed, supported by pillows, he sits up, his two hands placed on Augusta's fair hair; she kneels beside her expiring parent, and weeps with wild despair. A beautiful girl of eleven, she is early called to suffer bereavement!

* See Note N. *Deaths of Earl and Countess.*

Her mother lies cold below,—her father lies sinking before her. No marvel the poor child weeps! She is losing a fond father,—has lost a fond mother. Beside her stands the tall, stalwart Marquis of Arranmore. His face is buried in his hands. He is losing a dear friend and brother! At the foot of the couch kneels the clergyman, at the side of Mr. Ravensworth, offering a prayer to heaven to support and comfort in the hour of death, and look with pity on the orphan. He is losing a kind patron. Near the door are grouped the weeping servants. They are losing a generous master. There is one other occupant of the chamber,—the Earl's Newfoundland dog. That dumb animal knows well his lord is dying, and with wistful glance watches his every movement. On a small table beside the bed are the sacred Elements, about to be administered. All are silent. Nought is heard save the subdued weeping of men, and the unrestrained sobs of the only representative of woman, poor little Augusta. That still silence is broken. Who speaks? The dying man. Every ear is attentive,—every heart responsive as he speaks!

"Andrew, you have ever been a faithful servant to me; when I am gone, for my sake, be a faithful servant —nay friend—to my child!"

"Gude bless you! I will—I will!" cried the poor old man. "But, oh! it is a sair trial to lose you, my good master!"

"I say the same to you, Philip, and the rest. Adieu to you all."

The Earl ceased. Again the voice of weeping was heard. Poor old Andrew came forward and pressed his master's hand to his lips, then retired, whispering the rest to follow him, leaving only the family in the room.

"And now, my little Augusta, your papa is dying, love! You will be an orphan, my child; but the God

of the fatherless will be your God! Promise me, darling, to seek early that friend,—the only friend on the bed of death. Kiss me, love. And I am sure your uncle will be a kind uncle to you when your papa is no more. Farewell, my little Augusta, God bless and keep you!"

Another pause:—then, addressing the Marquis, he continued: "You will be a father to my child when she is left an orphan. Oh! bring her up so that she may resemble her sainted mother. And you, my dear Ravensworth, you, too, will remember my daughter's spiritual welfare. You are her Godfather. Oh! act up to your sacred office! I should like to see you alone, Arranmore, now,—only a few moments, and then I will receive the Communion."

At the hint Mr. Ravensworth led Augusta from the room to an ante-chamber, whither he and Mr. Power also retired.

The Earl then said, "My dear Arranmore, I wished to see you privately about the possibility of there being yet a claimant to my title. Should such a one come forward, promise me, as a friend and brother, you will abide by justice. Not even for Augusta, to whom I commend your fondest love, depart from the right, or swerve from truth. You will promise me?"

"I will," said the Marquis, scarcely articulating the word in his grief.

"And you will be Augusta's guardian and guide. You and Ravensworth I have made co-trustees and guardians. Oh! bring her up to emulate her dear mother,—this is my dying wish,—let it be sacred! I should of all things like the union of our families in Augusta and your Arthur, but only if they love each other. You will bury me side by side with Ellen. And that is all. You may call Mr. Power now."

The last Sacrament was then devotionally received by the dying man, his pastor, the Marquis, and Mr. Ravensworth. Then the Earl, whose breathing became short and painful, expressed a wish to be left alone for some short time. He kissed Augusta, and pressed the hand of his friends, who adjourned to the ante-room, so as to be in hearing of the slightest call. They heard his difficult breathing grow shorter and fainter, till at last the gasps were few and very distant from each other, and then ceased to be heard.

"He must be sleeping," said the Marquis. "I will go and see."

He stole to the bedside. The Earl's hands were clasped in the attitude of prayer, his lips slightly parted, his eyes closed,—and for ever! Through the door of his lips the breath no longer flowed. The feather held to his mouth was unswayed,—the mirror untarnished. Without a sigh he had passed away, and had calmly sunk into his long last sleep, smiling while all around him wept.

"Weep not so, my child," said Mr. Power to Augusta, as she threw herself on her father's breast. "Weep not so. Your papa is happy now, and in heaven with your mamma."

But the child wept on, till her uncle and grandfather gently drew her from the scene, each resolving he would be all to that fatherless, motherless little girl, that ever her fond parents could have been, had they been spared to her youthful years.

CONCLUSION.

OUR tale is finished. We have seen the curse, pronounced long ages ago, fulfilled on a whole race! Each in the flower of her age, each in the pride of his strength, has been remorselessly cut down by Death.

First the accomplished Edith, burned on the night of the wedding-ball of her brother; next the fair-haired Florence, broken-hearted at her young lover's death; then Frank, on the field of glory; then the terrible death of the Captain shocked us, and the self-wrought doom of the unhappy Edward L'Estrange, the hero of the book,—the unhappy, ill-starred man, who should have lived and died, as his happier brother the Earl lived and died. Our heroine, Ellen, faithful to death, fulfilled her promise, Ruth-like, to go where her husband went; to lodge where he lodged; his people became her people, and her God his! When he died she died, and nought parted them—not even death! We cannot dismiss our favourite without a few passing words on her character.

In early youth, too much tinged with romance, she committed a great fault, for we must not shut our eyes to the fact,—she most decidedly jilted her first lover for the young Earl. Our readers may excuse her if they like. We might excuse her,—but she never excused herself! True she really loved him not, and the Earl was her first true love; but she learned a bitter lesson, how wrong it was to encourage what she could not reciprocate; how wrong to lead on a lover to distraction!

Ah! hearts are brittle ware, and easily broken! Ellen then committed *one* great fault!—but her whole life suffered for it; never was sin more bitterly visited. Our readers, however indulgently they may view her error, must mark the fatal consequences one swerve from TRUTH entailed on herself and all connected with her.

And now we need only add that the Earl and Countess were laid side by side, followed to the tomb by the whole surrounding neighbourhood—high and low, rich and poor; no eye unwet; no voice but praised the dead, and sympathized with the poor little orphan Countess.

Another orphan sympathized and wept with Augusta, —Caroline Lennox, who had safely returned home.

We now leave the story to our readers' acceptance, and conclude with the best wish—that from these incidents the young may learn to follow the good, and to forsake the wrong. That it is better to live, and die, like the Earl and his Countess, than like Captain de Vere, or the unhappy Edward L'Estrange!

APPENDIX.

Note A, *vol.* i, *page* 6.—Oliver Cromwell.

The Protector, as is well known, died on the anniversary of his two greatest victories.

The 3rd of September, 1650, beheld him victor at Dunbar, the 3rd of September, 1651, at Worcester; the 3rd of September, 1658, he yielded up his ambitious soul.

A terrific hurricane swept over England the night he died, and it is worthy of record that a similar convulsion of the elements took place at the deaths of Napoleon Bonaparte, Pitt, George IV., and other men of note.

Note B, *vol.* i, *p.* 10. Weird of the Wentworths.

Weird, derived from the Saxon, means *fated;* it is here used as a substantive; more frequently it is found adjectively, *e. g.*:—

"The *weird* sisters, hand in hand."—*Macbeth.*
"To the *weird* lady of the woods."—*Old Ballad.*

Sir Walter Scott uses it as a substantive throughout his novels. *Vide* Guy Mannering, chap. xlvi. "The Weird's Dreed."

The original *weird*, *curse*, or *fate*, is to be found in the archives of a good English family; I forget where I read it, but it made a great impression on my mind.

The name *Wentworth* is selected merely as one connected with the author's family, and has no historic reference to the Straffords, or any other title in our peerage.

Note C, *vol.* i, *p.* 55. Queen's Drive.

The road *probably* did not exist, *certainly* not as the "Queen's Drive," at the time of our tale. If any critic catches up the anachronism, I can only defend myself with Cowper's lines:—

"No matter when, a poet's muse is
To make them grow just where she chooses."

Note D, *vol.* i, *chapter* xi. —Switzerland.

The descriptions are drawn from nature, and the impressions those which a tour, in the loveliest weather, through the romantic country created in the author's mind. He, however, believes he has crowned Rigi with an hotel before due time.

Note E, *vol.* i, *p.* 140.—Devil's Bridge.

Le Pont du Diable is a thread-like bridge spanning a tremendous gap made by the Reuss through the rocks near Fluellen. The author, with some friends, saw it under the circumstances here described, and the little incident narrated actually took place among the party.

Note F, *vol.* i, *p.* 148.—The Towers.

Though the main topics of the scenery are true to nature, it is almost needless to say no such castles as the Towers ever existed near the Lammermoors save in imagination. The same may be said of the scenery in the next few chapters. Individually each spot is as faithful a picture of *some* place as the author could draw, but *en masse* they are grouped without any attention to topography beyond the general resemblance one spot has to another in Scotland's romantic land.

Note G, *vol.* i, *p.* 237.—Justifiable Suicide.

The author is aware that some demur may be raised against the lawfulness of suicide under *any* circumstances, and that many deem it irreconcileable with a Christian profession in *every* contingency. He begs to leave it an open question. During the Indian mutiny, and in similar cases of certain death by human violence, he believes that suicide was not only attempted, but committed, by truly religious persons. The moral character of the heroine was only gradually developing itself, and he trusts all final judgment upon her will be reserved till the close of the romance.

Note H, *vol.* i, *p.* 258.—Rebecca.

Owing to corresponding incidents a certain resemblance to the celebrated scene in *Ivanhoe* was almost unavoidable; the author hopes he has steered clear of any intentional likeness, but if he has caught a faint echo from the immortal Scott, he is not ashamed to own it. "*Sequiturque patrem, non passibus æquis.*"

Note I, *vol.* ii, *p.* 45.—The Funeral.

The scene at Lady Arranmore's funeral was taken from the description of the impressive and beautiful ceremony performed on the occasion of the late deeply lamented Prince Consort's sepulture.

Note K, *vol.* ii, *p.* 126.—Val di Bovino.

This Val is a narrow defile formed by the *Cervaro* through the Apennines, and has always been the celebrated haunt of brigands. The following scene is not fictitious, though names are of course changed.

Note L, *vol.* ii, *p.* 129.—The Vardarelli.

This was the name of some notorious banditti in the beginning of this century. I have no reason to believe they were not true Italians, though here a foreign parentage is given to them.

Note M, *vol.* ii, *p.* 175.—The Mysterious Guide.

This story is taken from an adventure which in part happened to a countryman of the author's.

Note N, *vol.* ii, *p.* 259.—Deaths of Earl and Countess.

The end of our heroine and her lord is also taken from real life.

THE END.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, STAMFORD STREET
AND CHARING CROSS.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 042028628